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To Miss Barrie Farquharson,
with compliments,
from her friend,
The Author.

March, 1907.

THE OLD

SCOTTISH PRECENTOR

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AN EX-LATERANIST.

(Photo. by Morgan, Aberdeen.)

Yours most sincerely,
W. Wilmot Gibson.

The Old Scottish Precentor

HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHICAL ANECDOTAL AND REMINISCENT

BY

W. MILNE GIBSON

"EX-LATERANIST"

ILLUSTRATED

Aberdeen:
ABERDEEN DAILY JOURNAL OFFICE
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FOREWORD

NO apology is deemed necessary for the issue of this little volume. There must of necessity be many who have kindly recollections of the Old Precentor, and to these the work is respectfully dedicated. Opportunity has been taken to embody for the first time, it is believed, sidelights connected with the very early days of the Lateranist; and in this connection the writer desires to tender his grateful thanks to the friends who have so willingly assisted him in the course of his researches. Especially is he beholden to the proprietors of the "Aberdeen Daily Journal" for permission to reprint much of the matter which previously appeared in the columns of that paper; to Mr. William Litster, Aberdeen; Mr. Alexander Pirie, Aberdeen; Mr. J. M. Anderson, Fraserburgh; Mr. William Walker, author of "Bards of Bon-Accord"; Mr. George Walker; and Mr. Gavin Greig, M.A.

Others, whose names are not mentioned, will please take the will for the deed.

In the matter of illustrations, it may be pointed out that the portraits of Messrs. James Chalmers, senior and junior, appear for the first time in any local work; and a similar remark applies to the double-page reproduction from "John Knox's Psalter." All the other portraits appear by kind permission of their several owners.

ABERDEEN, *January, 1907.*

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Mr Ludovic G. Sandison.

Mr Alexander Pirie.

Mr John F. Anderson.

The Old Scottish Precentor.

The old-time precentor is practically dead, and there is none left to cry—"Long live the Precentor!" The interesting soul died gamely, but slowly, and now we may take comfort from the thought that he is for ever silent. He may well have been left in peace, perhaps, but for the fact that there lives a generation that knew him not. This, by way of an apology for the present attempt to resuscitate him. Besides, unlike the minister and beadle—both of whom have been rendered immortal—the precentor has been all but ignored in our national literature. That he was a worthy no one will deny. During the week he might be only the tailor, "souter," smith, "wricht," merchant, or dominie; but on Sunday he was the autocrat of the "lateran"—the be-all and end-all in "singing the psalms of Dauvit to the tunes of Dauvit," and "only a little lower than the"—minister! Critics might rave, and in their impotency hurl invectives at his head. They might say he could only sing a "set" number of tunes, and these incorrectly. In volume and quality they were ready to liken his voice to that of a bull of Bashan. Pitch, expression, time,

and phrasing were all lacking. If he heard the remarks, he never turned a hair, so to say. Perhaps, however, the severest censure ever passed on a precentor of the old school was that pronounced by an old lady in the Highlands. "If the Almighty's pleased wi' that kind o' singin', He's easy pleased, and has nae lug for music," she declared. But to these and other rude comments the precentor was totally oblivious, and calmly kept the even tenor of his way. The "dask" was in his eyes the complement of the pulpit. One was of no use without the other. And he was jealous of his trust.

"I wish you wadna pitch your tune sae high, Jeems," said an old-time minister to his praise leader. "They say your singin's sharp." "It's a guid job, sir, we haena' baith the same faut," was the reply, "for the folk say your discoorses are dreadfu' flat."

"It's aye the way, doctor," said another knight of the lateran; "when the folk ken that I'm to be precentin' and that ye are to preach, there's sure to be a fu' kirk."

PRECENTORS AND THEIR WAYS.

As singing was "understanded of the people" in those days, the louder the voice the better the precentor. "The sma' vice was nae eese ava'." Neither was skill expected nor looked for. Provided the leader "didna gang oot o' the tune a'thegither,"

there was not much fault to find. Even a midnight Saturday sederunt, followed by a "roosty" voice and a "shawky" hand on Sunday left no stain on the leader's fair name and fame! In the matter of speed, tunes such as French, Kilmarnock, and the "Auld Hunner'd" were sung at funereal pace, and you could "jist tak' breath onyway that was maist convenient."

If the precentor was enterprising—choirs, then, were few and far between—he would get a few of the "young chaps" in the district to rally round him in "the body o' the kirk," and, in return for their musical assistance, would give out the name of the tune he proposed to sing. It was not always safe or prudent to do so, however. Out of a repertory of something like a dozen tunes—the stock-in-trade of one worthy who never used a music book—St Paul was first favourite. It had been "soughed ower" to him by a brother vocalist, and was "spleet new" to both. The 23rd Psalm was given out from the pulpit one Sunday, but "Johnnie" was prepared. "St Paul's, boys!" he proclaimed in a stage whisper. The psalm was laboriously but safely piloted through, though, as usual, the tune was pitched too high. Then a portion of the 51st Psalm was to be sung to—"Coleshill, this time, boys!" A start was made which proved a false one. He tried the first line no less than three times, but St Paul had

the best of the argument all through, and so Johnnie had perforce to give in. "Weel, an't be to be St Paul's, boys, juist St Paul's let it be!" was his final philosophic comment.

Occasionally an amateur took the place of the professional precentor. Owing to the absence of the leader of praise of a coast-side kirk, a fisherman was asked by the minister to perform the duties. After the service, John walked home with his head in the air, the proudest man in the country.

"Janet Morris," said he, addressing his wife, "ye'll no guess what I was daein' i' the kirk the day. Woman, I was singin'!"

Janet looked at his beaming countenance, and remarked—"Weel, John Morris, ither folk wad be singin' i' the kirk as weel's you."

"Aye, but I was precentin', Janet Morris—i' the box, woman; d'ye no unnerstan?"

"You, John Morris—precentin'!"

"Aye, me precentin', Janet Morris."

"Guidsake, John Morris, an' were the folk pleased, think ye?"

"Oo, aye," said John, "I think they were gey weel pleased — they were a' lauchin' onyway."

"READING THE LINE."

"Reading the line" became an institution that proved most difficult to eradicate.

By the way, this old custom did not originate in Scotland, but in England. The practice is still kept up in the Highlands—more especially where the service is in Gaelic. The illiterate habit led to some queer experiences. A precentor, on one occasion, failed to catch the tune and kept reading the line—"Teach me, O Lord, the perfect way," hoping at last to succeed. After repeated attempts, an old farmer could stand it no longer, and blurted out—"Aye, man, I'm thinkin' the Lord has muckle need to teach ye!"

With reference to this "lining out" process, a good story comes from Paisley. Old Janet lived there about the time attempts were being made to abolish the uncouth practice. The old body strongly objected to any change from what she and her "forebears" had been accustomed to, and told her minister there was nothing gave her greater satisfaction and delight than to "gust her gab" twice with the line—first when it was read, and a second time when it was sung. A short time after this, a "repeat" tune was sung in the church, and to this Janet audibly dissented. She again appealed to the minister. "But you told me, Janet," was the reply, "that you liket to gust your gab with the line." Janet was for once silenced.

Sometimes the occupant of the "dask" indulged in "forty winks," and this frequently caused unconscious mistakes. It is told of one worthy that the young minister

paused in his sermon through a failure of memory, and the man of music concluding that the discourse was ended, proceeded to "give out" the intimation—"The prayers of this congregation are earnestly requested on behalf of a young man in great distress of mind and body!" But the minister, too, was sometimes guilty of falling asleep on duty. Who has not heard the story of the greybeard? The precentor's words went done one Sunday, and he whispered up to the pulpit—"It's a' dune, minester, it's a' dune!"

"Weel, weel," said the clergyman, waking up, "tell Kirsty there's plenty mair i' the greybeard." The concluding paraphrase on that occasion began—

How bright these glorious spirits shine!

THE "REPEAT" TUNE.

The "repeat" tune was much in evidence in the old precentor's day. A minister, unfavourable to repetition of the kind, reached over the "book-board," and, making a handful of the leader's hair, cried—"Stop, Dauvit, stop! When the Lord repeats, we'll repeat, but no till then." The following verse has evident reference to the repeat tune, and—other things!

Could puir King Dauvit but for aince
To this auld kirk repair,
And hear his psalm thus wars'led oot,
Good Lord! how he would swear!

But the "repeat" tune was a fearful and wonderful thing. Conjure up, if you can, the vision of an elderly, sedate, venerable-looking man shouting at the stretch of his voice and reiterating gloatingly three or four times the phrase—"We have done wicket—lye." And at "the third time of asking," the last syllable was spun out "lye, hi! hi! hi! hi!" followed by a grand finale—"We have done wicket—lye"—sung triumphantly. That was one form of the repeat tune. Another specimen was in use long after choirs formed part and parcel of the service. In this instance the trebles covered themselves with glory as they endeavoured to make the following request known:—

O for a man,
they sang softly—
O for a man,
a trifle louder:
O for a man,
getting excited;
O for a man,

they screamed; and, with a crescendo and diminuendo, the full purport of their prayer was made intelligible:—

O for a man—sion in the skies.

In the pursuit of their commendable object, the precentor willingly assisted.

Was it not the late Professor Blackie who propounded the notion that every Scot should sing his way to heaven with the Psalms of David in one hand and the songs of Burns in the other? It is said,

too, that an important reason, given by a late professor of singing, as to the necessity of everyone studying music was the fact that it would be "the only thing we will be able to practise in another life." Be that as it may, the old Scottish precentor did not lack zeal or knowledge of both psalms and songs, and such advice would have been superfluous in his day. The names of John Wilson and David Kennedy need only be mentioned to emphasise the truth of the assertion. All honour to these and the lesser lights!

"SANG SCHULES."

More than a mere passing reference must be made to the old-fashioned, but useful "Sang Schules," and, as these old institutions had not a little to do in the making and "upkeep" of the old-time "lettergae," or "uptaker of the psalm," and the precentor, some details regarding them may prove not only interesting, but also informative — at least to the present-day reader. The Sang Schule dates back to the thirteenth century. For a long period prior to the Reformation, and, indeed, for some considerable time afterwards, much attention was paid to the musical part of the Church service by the magistrates and councils of the various towns and burghs where a Sang Schule existed. And not only were these schools to be found in all the Cathedral cities of Scotland—for they

Per omnia secula seculorum
Prefatio de natiui-
tate christi solennis
Dominus vobiscum Sursum corda Gratias agam⁹
domino deo nostro Vere dignum et iustum est equum ⁊
salutare. Nos tibi semper et vbiq; gratias agere domine
sancte pater omnipotens eterne deus. Quia per incarna
ti verbi mysterium noua mentis nostre oculis lux tu e-
clarita tis infulsit. Vt dum visibiliter deum cognoscimus
per hunc in inuisibilium amorem rapiamur.

Part of a Roman Missal, Basilee, 1486.

were a distinctively Scottish institution—but they also existed in several of the smaller towns, such as Ayr, Dumbarton, Lanark, Cupar, Irvine, etc. They would also seem to have extended to the far north, for we are told that, in 1544, Bishop Reid founded and endowed a song school in Orkney. So much for the antiquity of these educational establishments.

Originally, the teaching was confined to "music, morals, and manners," but, after the Reformation, the education extended to "the three R's." Even then, however, music was the chief course of instruction, and although at the outset it would appear that the study was confined to Cathedral singers, this hard-and-fast rule was relaxed later on, and the classes opened up so as to include laymen. The Gregorian chant—naturally, of course—held an early and important place in the musical curriculum.

THE ABERDEEN SCHOOL.

According to an ancient record, music began first to be taught in Aberdeen about 1256; and the then master of the school was required to see to the due attendance of four singing boys at divine service in St Nicholas Church. The precise time at which the Sang Schule became a separate institution is practically unknown. One authority gives the year as 1370, but this date seems somewhat doubtful. Be that as it may, however, the local school had

the longest life of any of its contemporaries, though little can now be gleaned of its very early history.

RICHARD BOYLE.

We learn that an organ was introduced into St Nicholas Church somewhere about 1457; but the earliest appointment of a master to the Song School dates back only to 5th May, 1483, when Richard Boyle was made the head of the establishment. He was, however, we are told, put over the head of his "ale maister," Sir Andro Thomson. Boyle had but a short term of office, being in turn displaced by the player on the new organ of St Nicholas—Robert Hutchensone—in 1485. Boyle was relegated to the position of teacher, or "doctour" of the school, under Hutchensone. Sir Thomas Bynne and Sir Andrew Cooper followed in 1505; and John Cumming in 1518. In 1541 the Town Council granted to "Robe Portair and Robe Nicholsoun ilkane of thame fourthy shillings to bye thame clayse, to be given thame yeirly sua thei continew the Sang Schules, and serf in thair queir."

JOHN FETHY.

1544—Sir John Fethy, or Fethe, was appointed one of the prebendaries of St Nicholas queir, "to have the organs, and Sang Schule for instructing the bairnis." (The organist of the time had been ap-

pointed chaplain of St Katharine's.) The salary for both posts was twenty pounds Scots. With special reference to Fethy's term of office, it should be here pointed out that John Lesly, subsequently Bishop of Ross, has been erroneously written about in Kennedy's Annals, and later would-be authorities, as being a prebendary of St Nicholas and "Master of the Sang Schule." This is, however, a mistake. Fethy was a somewhat remarkable man for his time. He is said to have studied abroad and returned to Scotland a fully-equipped musician. The information is given in a MS. of "Ayrs and Sonnets," to be seen in Trinity College, Dublin. The MS. in question was written by one Thomas Wood, vicar of St Andrews. A note to be found in the book in Wood's handwriting, and bearing date 1592, refers to Fethy thus:—"This man was the first organist that ever brought in Scotland the curious new fingering and playing on organs; and zit is mair nor threescore zeires since he cam hame." Some two years after his appointment to the school in Aberdeen, differences arose on matters of discipline between Fethy and his "doctour"—John Blak. The Town Council were called on to settle the dispute, which they did by giving Fethy full powers, his teachers under him to be nominated, and "input be him as thinkis expedient, and gif ever he (Blak) falit

agane to the said Sir John in onything conserning the said skuill, to be dischargit of all proffetis he has of the townn of Aberdene for his service within their queir and kirk thereof." The strained relations continued, however, and led to the discharge of "all their feallis within the queir" in 1547. The Dean of Guild was ordered not to pay them till new arrangements had been made. About 1556 Fethy disappears from the organ and Song School, and in that year his late assistant was being spoken of as "Maister of the Skuill." Later Blak was conjointly chorister and master of the "myd lattroun."

But now troublous times loomed in the near distance. With the Reformation, "the kirk was spulzied, the Song School and Convent were laid in ruins."

REFORMATION DAYS.

Up to Reformation days the Aberdeen Sang Schule stood in the churchyard near the church of St Nicholas. In 1586, it is said that a little house was built—or about to be built—to the keeper of the kirk door "where the Sang Schule was"; and in 1593 or 4, "great stanes" were carried for building purposes "from where the old school was." It could not therefore possibly have been the building in Back Wynd known as the "Kirk Ludge" which the Sang Schule occupied till the middle of the eighteenth century, for it was not till 1605

that the Town Council so arranged that property as to make it suitable for such a purpose.

The school now lay in abeyance till 1570, when Andrew Kempt was appointed—after, in the usual way, petitioning the Town Council. Kempt did not remain long in office, for Blak, who had decamped during the "troubles," returned, and was reinstated in 1575. Blak died in 1587, and John Anderson was appointed in the same year at a yearly salary of forty pounds. Dying about two years later, William Skene was appointed in 1589. The division of the St Nicholas Church into two "preaching kirks" took place in 1586, and as it had been the practice of the master of the Sang Schule to "uptake the psalm" in the reformed service, it was arranged in 1597 that he should do so at both churches—by himself at one and his "doctour" at the other. An addition of ten merks was added to his salary of six score merks to enable him to pay his assistant! About this time a double seat to accommodate "ye bairnis of ye Sang Skuill" was put into the church. Skene died in 1598, and on the 17th November of that year John Leslye of Kintore was temporarily appointed to fill the vacancy. Shortly after this the locality of the Song School seems to have been changed, for in the burgh accounts it is now referred to as being "upon the Castle Hill."

A REMOVAL.

In 1601, the school was removed to "Thomas Nicholson's new bigget house at the burn-heid," where it remained till 1605. The Town Council then ordered the "Kirk Ludge" at the north-west end of the Kirkyard to be repaired and divided into three houses to hold the Song School and "the twa Inglis Schoollis."

As has already been stated, at most of the Song Schools throughout Scotland reading, writing, and arithmetic were taught, after the Reformation. These subjects in Aberdeen, were, however, kept separate and taught by different masters in special schools from time to time. "Music, manners, and virtue" were ever the avowed subjects of the education imparted in the Aberdeen Song School, but gradually, during the 17th century, music —vocal and instrumental—became the sole subjects of instruction. The school, indeed, became what its new name implied—"The Music School."

NEW PREMISES.

After removing into the new premises in Back Wynd, in 1607, Patrick Davidson was appointed master with a salary of eighty pounds Scots, together with school fees, and "perquisites" derived from special privileges, such as playing and singing at banquetings and lykewakes.

ANDREW MELVILLE.

In 1621, Andrew Melving, or Melville, was appointed doctor of the Music School and uptaker of the psalm in either the old or new (West or East Parish Churches). He was doctor from 1621 to 1636, when he was appointed master of the Music School, which office he filled till 1640, the year of his death. Melville was admitted a Burgess of Guild "ex gratia." He married a daughter of the previously named Patrick Davidson, after whose death came the appointment of master. The school did not prosper under Melville. It is said that the direct cause of this was the "subscribed Covenant."

THOMAS DAVIDSON.

Thomas Davidson, brother-in-law to Melville, succeeded the latter as master in 1640. This Davidson played a rather important part in local musical history, and deserves some attention. On 16th January, 1666, we are told, his salary was augmented and raised to the magnificent sum of 250 merks! Mr Davidson was the editor of a famous Aberdeen work—"Songs and Fancies"—which consists of madrigals and songs—many of them arranged from Gastoldi, and chiefly for three voices S.S.B. The collection was published by John Forbes, Aberdeen, and thereby hangs a tale. Three editions of the work are, or were, in existeqnce—the dates being 1662, 1666, and

1682. It was originally printed in separate parts, and a "Cantus" copy having come into musical hands, the work began to be spoken of as "Forbes's Cantus." The editor, it would appear, was an unassuming man, and probably not generally known. His initials only are given—"T.D., Mr of Musick." Each of the reprints differs slightly from the original. The introduction to the "Songs and Fancies" is from the pen of Davidson; and it will thus be seen that John Forbes was merely the printer! In 1879, the work was again reprinted in the Paisley New Club series. William Forbes became doctor in the Music School in 1652—under Davidson.

LOUIS DE FRANCE.

Another illustrious master came, in 1675, in the person of Louis de France. This Frenchman, who came to Aberdeen from Edinburgh, seems, according to Dr Dauney, to have had also something to do with the famous and much-written-about and disputed "Cantus." Dauney, in his preface to "Ancient Scottish Melodies," mentions that he has seen a music book, in manuscript, of the Charles II. period—at one time the property of the Keith-Marischal family—in which there are "ayrs to three, four, and five parts, and other fyne pieces in French, Italian, and Spanish, composed by the best masters in France; as also other fyne Scotish and Inglish airs, both old and new, taught by Louis de France,

now music master of Aberdene, having been the scholler of the famous musiciane M. Lambert, the King of France's chiefe musiciane, for the method and manner to conduct the voyces." And he adds that, "by securing the services of this gentleman (Louis de France), the city of Bon-Accord would seem to have rendered even more important service to the interests of music than by the publication of the 'Cantus.'" It is therefore contended that the "Cantus" is really "a memorial of Louis de France and his teaching in the Music School as inaugurated by Thomas Davidson."

At the date of de France's appointment William Forbes was still acting as doctour of the school, and David Melville (presumably a son of Andrew Melville) was granted leave to teach as second doctour, "upon his own hazard." From about the time of the next "incumbent"—John Inglis—the Music School began to decay. The following were among the last to hold office—Alexander Couper, 1692; Alexander Scott, 1721; Charles Macklean, 1736; and Andrew Tait—organist of St Paul's Chapel, and a member of the Aberdeen Musical Society—1740. From another source, however, we learn that James Chalmers, senior, was elected precentor of the West Parish Church and Maister of the Music School in 1740, also. This discrepancy needs some explanation, which, unfortunately, cannot at present be given. An account

of the last visitation by the magistrates to the Music School is to be found in the "Aberdeen Journal" of that year.

In 1758 came the closing scene in the life of this musical institution. After being shut up for some time, the building was, on 28th April of the year stated, sold for 780 pounds Scots to one Alexander Scott, a wright.

THE SCOPE OF THE SANG SCHULE.

If the information contained in the title to Davidson's "Songs and Fancies" is to be taken as authoritative, both vocal and instrumental music were taught in the Sang Schule. Here is a transcript of the title of the work—

> Cantos, Songs, and Fancies both apt for voices and viols as is taught in the Music School of Aberdeen, 1662.

In Mace's "Musick's Monument," of about the same date, the author directs the attention of his readers to the "Sang Schule of Scotland" as an institution well worthy of imitation south of the Tweed.

But the importance of music was even considered and encouraged by Parliament. A statute was passed in 1574 "instructing the provost, baillies, and counsele to sett up one sang scuile for instruction of the youth in the art of musick and singing, quhilk is almaist decayit, and shall shortly decay without tymous remeid be providit."

In Edinburgh and Glasgow the song schools, it would appear, never aroused much interest or attention. The Glasgow institution closed its doors in 1588—"the scuile sumtyme callit the sang scuile being sold to defray the expenses incidental to the heavy visitation of a plague."

THE FIRST ABERDEEN PSALTERS.

In comparatively early times, Aberdeen played an important part and occupied an honoured place in the history of Church music, and its reformation and improvement in Scotland. And in the matter of psalters, too, Bon-Accord was not far behind. "The Psalmes in Meeter, together with the tunes diligently revised and ammended by the most expert musicianes in Aberdene," is the title of a work published in 1625 by the first "toune's printer"—Edward Raban, "the Laird of Letters," as he quaintly designated himself. Again, in 1633, from the same publishing press, "above the meill mercat" on the north side of the Castlegate, came a second volume—"The Book of Common Order," with "the psalmes in prose and meeter with tunes." It is somewhat remarkable to find music type thus early in use here. Raban, it may be mentioned, came to Aberdeen from Edinburgh, and was appointed "toune's printer" on 20th November, 1622. The psalter of 1625 was among the most complete works of the kind that

up to that period had been produced in Scotland.

Apropos of early printing in Aberdeen, it may not be amiss to note that John Forbes, publisher and printer of that renowned musical work, "The Cantus Songs and Fancies" (1662)—the first collection of "profane" music given to Scotland—was, according to an Act of the Aberdeen Town Council, dated 29th July, 1657, the originator of a "Weekly Diurnal," the earliest newspaper published in the city. No fewer than three editions of "The Cantus" are in existence—the dates being 1662, 1666, and 1682. The last named was issued by John Forbes the younger.

If, from a purely literary point of view, music was thus early astir in Aberdeen, what position did it occupy practically? Let the celebrated Richard Francks, who visited the city in 1658, speak. He says—"Here you shall have such method in their musick, and such order and decorum of song devotion in the church as you will admire to hear, though not regulated by a cantor or quirister, but only by an insipid parochial clerk that never attempts further in the mathematicks of music than to compleat the parishioners to sing a psalm tune." A hundred years later, John Wesley, who knew and could appreciate good hearty singing, visited Monymusk on two different occasions; and he expressed himself, through the medium

of his Diary, as being most satisfied and delighted with the congregational singing in the Parish Church, then under the charge of Thomas Shannon.

"THE PSALTER OF DAVID."

In Sir George Grove's "Dictionary of Music," a writer speaks of an important and most interesting book of metrical psalms. A unique copy of this work is in the library of Brasenose College, Oxford. In the year 1549—a hundred years before Francis Rous's Collection of the Psalms in Metre, revised and sanctioned by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, was published—

There appeared a metrical translation of the Psalter complete, together with the evangelical Hymns, and music set in four parts, of which the title is "The Psalter of David, newly translated into English meeter in such sort that it maye the more decently and wyth more delyte of the mynde, be read and songe of al men. Whereunto is added a note of four partes, with other thynges as shall appeare in the 'Ipistle to the Reader.' Translated and imprinted by Robert Cowley in the yere of our Lord MDXLIX the XX daye of September. And are to be sold in Eley Rentes in Holbourne. 'Cum privilegis ad Imprimendum Solum.'"

The "Ipistle to the Reader" says:—

"A note of song iiii. parts, which agreth with the meeter of the Psalter in such sort, that it serveth for all the Psalms thereof, conteyninge so many notes in

one part as be syllables in one meeter, as it appeareth by the dyttie that is printed with the same?" The book is extremely interesting. . . . Its interest is of several kinds. In the first place, it is the earliest music in an English metrical version as yet discovered. It is also a double chant, a musical form hitherto supposed to be unknown till a hundred years later; and it thus shows by what a simple transition the passage from chanting the prose psalter to singing the metrical one might be accomplished. It would be unwise to argue from this single specimen that it was so accomplished, or that we see here the typical early metrical psalm tune; but certainly the discovery of this little composition, so obviously intermediate in character, very much diminishes the probability that anything like the chorale form which soon afterwards prevailed was known at this time.

The metrical version of the Psalms is in Scotland perhaps not quite such a living reality as it was, but, notwithstanding the ruggedness of the versification and the absolute poorness of prosody and diction, these Psalms seem destined to remain with us yet awhile. It must be evident to the thinking mind, however, that, apart from the purely musical aspect, the Psalms of David in all their poetic beauty can best be rendered from the prose version—chanted. True, in the first days of the Reformation the metrical Psalms were exclusively in use, but an explanation may be found in the fact that by no other means could the people take part in the Church worship.

Another collection, entitled a "Booke of Common Order for the use of the Kirk of Scotland," was printed at Middleburgh in 1602. For about a hundred years it was the habit, in these psalters, to print only the "ayres" of the tunes, in the tenor or C clef. This accounts probably for the desire in congregations that the precentor should be a tenor, in preference to a bass singer! The people in those days were apparently left to fill in a harmony or harmonies to the melodies in any way they pleased, and according to their several degrees of skill. The effect of such an arrangement had best be left to the imagination.

A ROUS'S PSALTER.

Those who have taken an interest in the subject of psalters know that the groundwork of the Metrical Version of the Psalms, which has been used in Scotland since May, 1650, was written by Francis Rous, Provost of Eton.

In 1643, he submitted a copy of his Version—bearing his name on the titlepage—to the Revision Committee of the House of Commons, who requested him to revise it. This he did, and his Version was reissued in 1646, and again submitted to the Revisers, and after a further revision, it was recommended by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and the Estates Committee, and adopted, and used on 1st May, 1650.

The existence of one of the few original copies of 1643 is so scarce, that Dr Cotton in his work on the subject says—"I never saw a copy in any library—public or private—except that of Dr Bliss, of Oxford," and which was sold at the sale of his library for £10 15s.

In February, 1893, a copy was discovered in a second-hand book-shop in London by Mr W. T. Brook, the well-known hymnologist. This copy was bound up with "The Book of Common Prayer," "The Holy Bible," "Downam's Concordance," "Sternhold and Hopkin's Psalms," all respectively dated 1642, and at the end this rare Psalter of Rous dated 1643. When found, the volume was about the size of Oliver and Boyd's Almanack with the Aberdeen Supplement, and on a fly-leaf "Paid Pickering for Binding, 1s 6d. 1713."

On the discovery being made, Mr Brook requested the bookseller to send it on approval to Mr W. L. Taylor, Peterhead (Mr Brook and Mr Taylor are correspondents), who at once purchased it. He has removed the psalter and bound it separately, and added the rare volume to his unrivalled collection of psalters.

MORE OLD PSALTERS.

Of the making of "Musick Bookes" and their multiplied publication there seems to have been no end in the days of the old-

In .xl. ℙrefatio. A vigil' pasce vsq; ad oct. t p dnicas vsq; ad ascēsio.

Q Ommuni⁹ Infra canonem. cantes et diem sacratissimuz celebrantes quo vnigenit⁹ tuus in tua tecū gloria coeternus in veritate carnis nostre vinbiliter corporalis apparuit. Sed t memoriam venerantes. In primis gliose sem per vginis marie genitricis eiusdē dei t dñi nostri iesu christi. Sed et beatorum apostolorum. ꝛc.

Er christum dominus
nostrum. Qui post resurrectio
nem suam omnibus discipu
lis suis manifestus apparuit:
et ipsis cernentibus est eleua-
tus in celum: vt nos diuini
tatis sue tribueret esse par-
ticipes. Et ideo cum ange.

C Sequens prefatio cuz suo cantu dicitur dominicis diebꝰ in quadragesima vsq; ad dominicā in ramis palmarum.

Terne deus. Qui cor-
porali seiunio vitia compes-
mis: mentem eleuas: virtutem
largiris et premia: per christuz
dominum nostrum. ℙer quē.

Part of a Roman Missal, Lugouni (Lyons), 1516.

time precentor. From the semi-official, authorised psalter down to the attempts made privately by the precentors themselves to provide in printed form copies of the tunes they sang on Sunday, the people seem to have had musical knowledge thrust upon them—willy-nilly. And the titles of these works are in many cases amusing. A universal favourite was "The Psalme Singers Delightfull Pocket Companyon." In one of these we find that "persons of the meanest" (capacity!) "may learn more of the true grounds of musick in a month by this booke than can be learnt in 12 months by any other work in Edinburghe." And the bookseller seem also to have kept an eye on the main chance, for after announcing in a weekly news print of the day his stock of psalters and "other musick bookes," one dealer added this very pat note —"N.B.—At the same place there is a neat mahogany press-bed for sale." "The Precentor: or an Easy Introduction to Church Music," was the title of a west of Scotland psalmody published about the beginning of the eighteenth century. But, of course, the earlier psalter must, to a much greater extent, have been the precentor's guide, philosopher, and friend.

AN EARLY PIONEER.

*Thomas Shannon was, in 1754, a soldier

*Fuller details may be found in Mr George Walker's "Aberdeen Awa'."

in a detachment of General Wolfe's regiment, then stationed in Aberdeen under the command of Lieutenant-General Bland, their quarters, of course, being the old Guardhouse. He made himself famous by his skill in Church music, and in training his comrades to read music at sight. The soldier bore a good character, and so, when application was made by some local civilians to allow him to teach his system in the district, the necessary permission was at once granted. As has been stated, he began in Monymusk, and taught with such success that application was next made for his discharge from the regiment, which was also readily granted. And so this early pioneer in the reform of psalmody began his notable career in the towns and villages of Aberdeenshire. That he took a prominent part in the great "revival" of 1754 there can be no apparent gainsaying; and it is further asserted that Shannon revolutionised the old psalmody by his new method, and killed the much-revered Reformation "Sang Schule."

Whether the ex-soldier was really the cause of the death of the antiquated "Sang Schule" we need not pause to inquire. If he was, he certainly raised from its ashes a new form of music, instinct with life and vitality; he practically brought back the time-honoured reputation of the city for musical taste and culture; he was, in fact, the means of making Aberdeen more

famous for its Church music than it had ever been before—no mean task to have accomplished, and for which all honour to his memory! Thanks, therefore, to Thomas Shannon, Aberdeen was the first city in Scotland to banish the old, slow, quavering style of singing previously used, and to introduce a comparatively plain song by means of single syllabic notes.

The success of Shannon's teaching brought him speedily into notice in the city, and when the new High or West Church was opened on 9th November, 1755, he and a "band" of his pupils—mostly farm servant lads and lasses, from Kintore, Kemnay, Fintray, and Monymusk—led the praise, "astonishing, electrifying, and delighting all the amateurs and virtuosi of the city." The new musical reformation was at the time thus explained—

It consists in the proper teaching of melody, and the introduction of harmony.

1. As to the melody, chosing the best old tunes previously known in Scotland, composing new ones, and collecting others from the best authors, so as to have sets proper for the several occasions of divine worship—such as grand or majestic, cheerful or thanksgiving, plaintive or penitential, etc.

2. Teaching the tune or sound truly and plain, without quavering or any kind of affectation.

3. Teaching them to the proper time, without which all must run into confusion.

Again, as to harmony or concord in different parts, this was in use in the country at the time

of the Reformation, and long afterwards, as is evident from sets of books published at different times up to 1714.

Yet through inattention it declined, and was forgotten, so that few have any idea of their great effect in music, which is so proper to give it the grandeur and solemnity requisite in churches.

Attention has only been paid to the tenor part or air, and people imagining that they might perform it according to their various humours—i.e., by quavering—the greatest confusion was soon introduced, and the melody too entirely lost in many places.

This shows that if harmony be once disregarded, the melody will likewise come to nothing, whereas the harmony yields not only its own peculiar pleasure, but is the best security of the justness of the melody, as every change in it must deviate from the harmony, which to the ear would be very offensive and immediately perceived.

How singularly true and just are the remarks quoted—even applied to much of the church music of our own day. It is genuinely applicable to much of the "ornamental" and "waterfall" music, which has long been a disgrace to our churches, and which many efforts have been made to improve and clear away.

That the new movement attracted attention may be gathered from the following paragraph which appeared in the "Aberdeen Intelligencer" of 25th November, 1754:—

We hear that a new method of singing the church tunes has been lately introduced with

great success into several congregations in this neighbourhood. The person who teaches it goes from one parish to another, and carries some of the best singers along with him, who join with him and under his direction are very assisting to the learners. By his skill in vocal music, and the use of a small instrument called a pitch-pipe, he has made a great reform upon this part of divine service. We hear he is come to this place, and is to teach the boys in Gordon's Hospital. It is said that some congregations look upon this as an unwarrantable innovation, and have refused it admission among them; we are, however, persuaded that an improvement so highly necessary, and so much to the honour of religion, will get the better of all prejudices, as the clergy and everybody of taste must approve of it.

"THE GOOD OLD TIMES."

As may readily be supposed, this old-time precentor did not occupy a bed of roses when he elected to be a music reformer. He lived in what may be termed a rougher age than ours. Swearing and other profanity were accomplishments that no man—were he gentle or simple—might neglect. The oaths that used to garnish and embellish the talk in fashionable circles were, to say the least, forcible, however politely they may have been expressed. Even the ladies, although not, perhaps, altogether in favour of the habit, voted it a great "aff-set" to conversation. So, also, drunkenness was not spoken of as such, for the man who could see his fellows under the table was a hero, and those who

were easily overcome by the "spirit"—"peer, feckless craiturs." Social clubs played an important part in the life of the Aberdonian of the period.

It is told of two musical worthies—bosom friends—that they were in the habit of meeting every night in a tavern, "from which they seldom stirred till they could not get home without a contrivance (!) What first failed L was his tongue; what first failed in B were his legs. L, therefore, about two or three in the morning, took B on his back, who, if it was necessary—as occasionally it was—could inquire at the watchman the way home!"

The opposition raised, not only against the new method, but its teacher as well, must have considerably disheartened a less courageous man than Shannon. Such innovation by a common soldier was not to be tolerated. And, to complicate matters still further, the professors of King's College did credit to themselves and honour to their University by appointing Thomas Shannon precentor in the Chapel at King's. Gideon Duncan, a weaver, and a consequential body, had for some time been precentor when he was thus somewhat summarily superseded. He was, however, notified that his own and his choir's services would be retained and paid for, provided they were loyal and conformed to and aided Shannon in his reformed style. The change of position proved

galling to Duncan, and so he revolted, and, along with a small "band," attempted to sing in the old-fashioned manner, hoping to spoil the efforts of the new precentor. Such action during worship was construed as a breach of the peace, for which Gideon Duncan was arraigned at the Old Aberdeen police or baillie court, and, being found guilty, was fined £50 Scots. Duncan and his friends appealed the case to the Court of Session, where the finding of the lower court was upheld.

Shannon's new method being so much easier and less complex than the old style, flourished and triumphed, and in a comparatively short time spread all over Scotland. In Edinburgh, an Association for the Improvement of Psalmody was instituted shortly after the revival began. The "Scots Magazine" of the time says:—"Whether the new method recently introduced in Aberdeen will be adopted is not yet decided." It was adopted, and a great wave of psalmodic reformation rolled over the length and breadth of the country. Thomas Shannon may, therefore, not only be looked upon as the pioneer of modern psalmody improvement, but also as a typical precentor of the age in which he lived.

THE DECLINE OF CHURCH MUSIC.

In his "Studies in Worship Music" (1880), Mr J. Spencer Curwen hazards the opinion that, in the first half of the

eighteenth century, Scottish psalmody reached its lowest point, and that the tunes then in use were reduced to twelve—described as "The Tunes o' Dauvit." What the "twelve" were, however, Mr Curwen has no certain knowledge, although he thinks he can make a rough guess at their names. But we are by no means left to guess-work. A publication appeared in the seventeenth century, printed by "Andro Hart, Edinburgh, 1622," containing only "ayres." Its title reads—"The XII. Common Tunes to the which all Psalmes of eight syllables in the first line and six in the next may be sung." These are clearly stated as—Old Common, Kings, Dukes, English, French, London, Stilt, Dunfermeling, Dundie, Abbay, Glasgow, and Martyrs. In 1635, the heirs of Andro Hart, of Edinburgh, published "The Scottish Metrical Psalter," which contained 31 Scottish tunes, arranged in four parts. In 1714, James Nicol, "the toune's printer," published in Aberdeen "Twelve Tunes for the Church of Scotland, composed in four parts, viz., Treble, Contra, Tenor, and Bassus according to the method used by the Master of the Musick School of Aberdeen." This edition, printed in six quarto leaves, was paid for by the Town Council, £24 (Scots) being the sum, together with an allowance of £1 16s (Scots) to the printer's servants. It should be noted that the custom

of the time was to "treat" workmen, and this was done by what was known as "drink money," given as "a token of harmony."

It is perfectly reasonable to assume that Nicol's booklet was really a republication of Andro Hart's original "Twelve Tunes"—the only difference being that in the later work the "ayres" were harmonised. The difference is important. May it not be inferred that the Aberdeen publication was meant to be the authorised guide for the harmonies of the tunes, and not a limitation of their number? It is also significant that a minute of the Aberdeen Session, bearing date January 20, 1755, states that the Session "appoint their precentors to sing only in all time coming the 12 Church tunes commonly sung in Scotland, and printed in parts." The enactment was found necessary, it would appear, because of a recital after the usual service in the High Church, at which some "new" tunes were introduced by a "trained band." In all probability the innovation was one of Thomas Shannon's; but the Session would have none of it.

A story is told of how a precentor in Stirling was "rewarded" for introducing Bangor—not one of the select twelve—one Sunday. The lateranist had scarcely begun when the minister jumped up, and, lifting the big pulpit Bible with both

hands, came down with great force on the unsuspecting head of the poor precentor, daring him ever to start such a tune in that kirk again!

It is hardly fair, however, to assume that Scottish Psalmody had reached its lowest point simply because "the powers" of the time sought to have greater uniformity in the praise of the sanctuary. Rather was it a sign of enlightenment that twelve tunes should be selected and harmonised for general use in all the churches. Many will remember the confusion caused even till nearly the end of last century by the endless variety of tune books and the innumerable—and frequently unsingable—harmonies they contained. Psalmody had reached a very low ebb, certainly, in the first half of the eighteenth century, but we have to look further afield for reasons than "The Tunes o' Dauvit." Two causes stand out in prominent importance. The first of these was the "lining out," or the reading of each line before it was sung. From about 1725, the practice was common in England, and in Scotland it was also all too prevalent. Indeed, in our own country it was a matter of vital principle Not quite fifty years ago an Edinburgh precentor, newly appointed, had instructions not to read the line. Before he was well started off one Sunday, a man in the gallery rose and shouted—"Read the line, sir, and not disgrace the worship!"

THE REVIVAL OF 1754.

The attempted "improvement" of 1754 and onwards was not destined to long bear fruit. It gradually lost grip—principally, perhaps, from a dearth of teachers with brains; and also by the introduction of the "quack" element, which in every age has done so much to retard progress. Committees petitioned their various Town Councils throughout the country to discourage those from teaching music who were not qualified. This was in 1758; and thus the battle raged, but without any visible or outward signs of improvement. In 1762—January 10—the following appeared in the advertising columns of a Glasgow newspaper—

As vocal and instrumental music is now becoming a branch of education for which the most people of all ranks in this city, and all other places in Europe, discover a very high regard, it is a matter of concern to several gentlemen, who are well-wishers and lovers of music in general, to find that the inhabitants of this city are much imposed upon by persons professing the above branches, very improperly qualified for the said piece of education, and who are daily increasing in their number to the discouragement of qualified professors in said art. This intimation is made, that all who are desirous of learning vocal or instrumental music may make strict inquiry about the professors thereof, whether they are or are not qualified for what they profess? And it will be proper to inquire if they can sing or play themselves? If they cannot, their employers may de-

pend on having their pockets picked and music receive great hurt, it being impossible for those who have not studied the grounds of music, and who cannot begin scholars, to be proper teachers or finishers of them. And before persons engage teachers it is recommended to them to have the approbation of proper judges.

Would it be treason to suggest that similar disinterested counsel might not be altogether amiss in our own day?

THE PITCH-PIPE.

Matters must have been in a very sorry plight when "R. G., Aberdeen," wrote to the "Scots Magazine" for April, 1755, in this strain:—"There is a new-fashioned profanation of the Sabbath introduced by singing the psalms at church with a herd-boy's instrument of music, which gives offence to many serious Christians." He goes on to say that, in place of the proper duties of meditation and prayer, the young folk "meet to whistle and fife," before and after sermon, "to improve themselves in this exercise." "Some, indeed, stay at home, or walk to distant churches, so as to avoid this abominable innovation." The singing in parts, "R. G." characterises as "nothing but what was begun by a profane heretic above a thousand years ago!" Robert Paterson, Scott's "Old Mortality" in the novel of that name, had also a horror of the pitch-pipe. He heard it on one occasion in an Aberdeen kirk, and so upset was he that, after the service, he declined

a glass of spirits and water, "to which he was supposed not to be very averse," and went off in bad humour.

INNOVATION AND INCOMPETENCE.

Prejudice against innovation of all kinds was strong in those early days. A mistress, one Sunday, took one of her female servants to her own church, where the musical service had been somewhat improved. "Weel, Janet," she inquired as they were leaving, "hoo did ye like it?" "It was verra bonnie, mem; but, oh! yon's an' awfu' wye o' spendin' the Sabbath!" Even an old school elder was loud in his denunciation of good, bright singing, stating that it was "an invention of the devil," and, "after a' it was naething but sacred pleesures!" Superstition, too, held sway. An old mole-catcher did occasional "precenting" in a certain church in the north. It was a fine summer day, on the occasion of the incident about to be related, and the church door was left wide open during public worship. Just as "Moudiewort" rose to sing the first psalm, a huge black dog entered the church, walked quietly up the "middle pass," sat down on its haunches, and, opening its jaws wide, was an interested listener. No voice save that of the precentor was heard. At the end of the verse, he closed the book and laid it down with a "bang" on the desk, exclaiming—"Did ye think I cam' here to sing to

dogs? I'll sing nae mair!" On the instant, the dog rose, walked solemnly down the quiet church to the door, and disappeared—nor did he ever come back again.

The mole-catcher, when retelling the story, was wont, with a bright gleam in his eye, to add—"I believe it was nae ither than Auld Hornie wha cam' in to disturb the worship." Incompetency on the part of the precenter, there can be no doubt, had much to do with the lack of interest among the people.

Sandy C—— was leader of the praise in N—— D—— at one time. He was once practising his "young fowk," when they went to bits over a new tune. Sandy himself, after struggling on alone for a few notes, also succumbed. He looked about him for a minute, and then said—"Lord, boys, ye're oot, an' I'm oot, an' we're a' oot thegither!"

GRACE NOTES.

A second cause was the addition of "grace" notes. These did more, perhaps, than anything else to destroy the grandeur and simplicity of the melodies. Tunes were so overladen and elaborated by grace notes that in certain cases they were altogether beyond recognition. Sometimes it was really a matter of great difficulty to tell one tune from another. Examples of this are still extant. One is to be found in Stainer and Barrett's "Dictionary,"

where no fewer than "twenty-one" readings of the "Luther's Hymn" melody are given. Mr Curwen, in his "Worship Music," also instances "French," in which the endless graces and flourishes are positively bewildering. We are indebted to Dr Mainzer—who demonstrated his "Movable Doh" and "Music for the Million" system in the North Church, Aberdeen, in the second or third decade of the last century—for these and similar illustrations. At the time he noted them down, Dr Mainzer was "doing" Strathpeffer, and gained his knowldege at first hand from the mouth of the precentor. The illustrations were afterwards collected and published under the title of "Gaelic Psalm Tunes."

From a text-book, entitled "The Rudiments of Music, by Robert Bremner, Edinburgh, 1756," some pertinent comments on the evil referred to may here be culled:—

Had these nonsensical graces (says the writer) been the same everywhere, it would have been the less matter; but every congregation, nay, every individual, had different graces to the same note, which were dragged by many to such immoderate length that one corner of the church, or the people in one seat, had sung out the line before another had half done; and from the whole there arose such a mass of confusion and discord as quite defaced this noblest part of divine worship. Endeavouring once to convince an old man, who was precentor in a country church, how absurd he rendered the music

by allotting so many different sounds to one syllable, when only one was intended, he replied with a good deal of briskness, and not a little heat, that he believed the people of his generation knew nothing of the matter; for his master was allowed to understand that affair thoroughly, and he had told him that there ought to be eight quavers in the first note of Elgin tune.

The same writer says that the principal qualification for precentorship was "poverty and a loud voice," it being a matter of no consequence whether the precentor knew a note of the music or not. Ruskin has referred to the subject thuswise:—

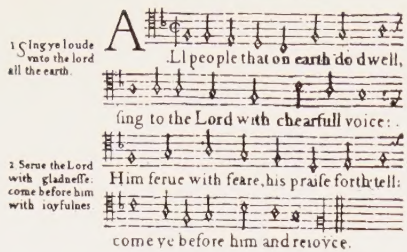
> The discordance of Scottish psalmody is as unexampled among civilised nations as the sweetness of their ballads. . . . The group calling themselves Evangelical ought no longer to render their religion an offence to men of the world by associating it only with the most vulgar forms of art. It is not necessary that they should admit either music or painting into religious service; but, if they admit either the one or the other, let it not be bad music nor bad painting; it is certainly in nowise more for Christ's honour that His praise should be sung discordantly, or His miracles painted discreditably, than that His word should be preached ungrammatically.

THE MUSICAL SOCIETY.

It should not however, be assumed that in Bon-Accord matters musical came to anything like a standstill. An orchestral body was formed in 1750, known as the

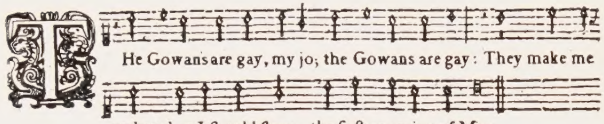
PSALME C. I. H.

¶ He exhorteth all to ſerue the Lord, who hath choſen vs and preferred vs, and to enter into his aſſemblies to prayſe his Name.

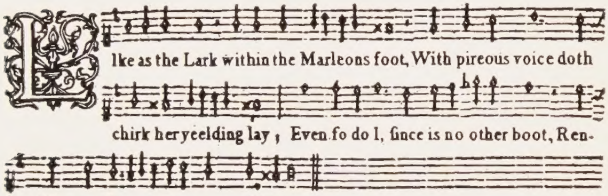

1 Sing ye loude vnto the lord all the earth.
All people that on earth do dwell,
ſing to the Lord with chearfull voice:
2 Serue the Lord with gladneſſe: come before him with ioyfulnes
Him ſerue with feare, his praiſe forth tell:
come ye before him and reioyce.

From a Book of Common Order, 1602.

THE XIX. SONG.



THE XXV. SONG.


Like as the Lark within the Marleons foot, With pireous voice doth
chirk her yeelding lay; Even ſo do I, ſince is no other boot, Ren-
dring my Song unto your will obey.

From "The Cantus," 1662.

Musical Society, which lived, flourished, and did good lasting work for at least sixty years. The names of many illustrious citizens and county gentlemen appear on the roll of membership of this society. Among others may be noted Bishop Skinner, Dr John Gregory, George Moir of Scotston, George Skene of Rubislaw, Colonel Knight Erskine, Sir William Forbes, Dr George Skene, Dr James Beattie, Dr Dauney, Mr Robertson of Foveran, Mr Annand of Belmont, Mr Thomson of Banchory, Mr Francis Peacock, Mr John Ewen, etc. Mr John Ross, the accomplished organist of St Paul's Episcopal Church, was conductor and leader; and the society rehearsed and gave fortnightly concerts in a hall owned by the members in Concert Court, Broad Street. These concerts were attended regularly by "the beauty and fashion of the northern capital."

The limited accommodation of the hall, together with the extra room taken up by the ladies of the period—who wore enormous hoops, the better to show off their dresses to advantage—caused the audiences to be "small and select." These ladies must have been not only enthusiastic, but also most unselfish, for it is on record that on more than one occasion they actually left their hoops at home in order to make room for additional listeners! Hoops are not now, fortunately, a source of trouble, but

all too frequently have we "the hat in the air" at concerts.

MUSICAL SOCIETY—1801.

DIRECTORS.

General Hay.	Alex. Irvine, Esq.
Sir William Forbes.	Thos. Leys, Esq.
Dr Skene.	Dr Livingston.
Hugh Leslie, Esq.	James Forbes, Esq.
Fras. Garden, Esq.	Wm. Black, Esq.
An. Thomson, Esq.	Alex. Tower, Esq.
Mr John Annand.	George Ogilvie, Esq.
Mr Fras. Peacock.	Mr Jas. Chalmers.
Mr Robertson.	Mr J. Ewen, treasurer.

THE TRANSITION STATE.

While matters were in this transition state in Aberdeen, Edinburgh had instituted an association for the improvement of its psalmody, and we find that the west of Scotland—Glasgow especially—was also trying to make musical affairs hum. A prominent figure of the period in the great metropolis of the west, dating from about 1757 onwards, was John Holden, an amateur musician of very considerable importance and usefulness. Holden was a potter to trade, we are told, and did a not inconsiderable business. He was, on 8th July, 1757, made a Burgess of Guild by purchase, and the "parchment" describes him as a "merchant." Holden seems to have taken a more than ordinary interest in the music of Glasgow College Chapel; and he acted as trainer of the "band" there. In proof of this, an entry is to be

found in the records of the time empowering the Chapel Committee to "pay Mr Holden £5 a year as a present to him from the chappel fund for instructing the band." In 1766, the same committee got instructions to purchase thirty copies of "Mr Holden's musick booke for use of the chappel." Three years later, we find him presenting 15 guineas to the Chapel Committee "for buying musick for the College," and a year later the sum of £21 10s "for the encouragement of musick in the University." The musick booke spoken of was a "Collection of Church Music, consisting of new setts of the common Psalm tunes, with some other pieces—principally designed for the use of the University of Glasgow." There is no authority for stating that Glasgow tune—well-known to a fast-dying generation—was Holden's composition. Another tune, of quite a different character, is in the collection named, which bears the title "Glasgow, or St Matthew's." From all that can be gleaned, John Holden was not only a scholarly, educated man, but also an eminent, practical musical theorist. He wrote "An Essay Towards a Rational System of Music," dedicated to the Chancellor, Lord Rector, and Professors of Glasgow College, which was issued in parts in 1770, and was spoken highly of—by Fetis in particular.

Francis Holden, a brother or son — the actual relationship is somewhat befogged—

was one of six precentors who, in September, 1783, petitioned the Magistrates and Town Council of Glasgow for an advance of salary. The matter was remitted to a committee, with power to "diminish the salary of Mr Joshua Campbell, who plays the city music-bells, and to give what's taken from him to the precentors," or otherwise do as they may think proper. When the "bellman's" history comes to be written, perhaps we may learn whether or not in this instance he had to submit to a decrease of salary to add to that of the uptakers of the Psalms!

DRASTIC MEASURES.

In those degenerate days, the parishioners in country kirks seem to have carried matters with a high hand. They occasionally declined to take part in the congregational singing. A story is told apropos of this, which may be quoted. Curiously enough, it was an Episcopalian Church in Halkirk where the incident happened. No singer of the Psalms made his voice audible save the "lettergae," as they called the precentor. "Lettergae," it may be explained, means one who "let's gae" or starts the tune! The leader was named Tait, a gardener in Beal. He sang so loud, and with such a large, open mouth, that a young fellow of the name of Iverach was tempted to throw a small stone into his mouth one Sunday, "whereby his

teeth were broke and his singing stopped at once." As the story goes—"Iverach immediately took to his heels, and the service was converted into laughter." Two of Tait's sons, however, gave chase, captured, and chastised the delinquent; thus "closing the unholy scene."

A WELCOME CHANGE.

If, however, the latter half of the eighteenth century heralded in and witnessed a long term of general practical degeneracy and inactivity, it also brought in its train a wave of theoretical reform in musical composition, destined to secure for itself a prominent and permanent place in contemporaneous musical history. The importance of this essential factor in shaping the fate and destinies of the music of the Church seems yet to be only partially realised and appreciated. Indeed, the complete and radical change in musical composition that took place at this critical juncture seems all too frequently to be overlooked, if not entirely ignored. In saying this, it is not meant to minimise laudable local effort to improve psalmody; but the best of these efforts had but merely passing effect. They were but evanescent, spasmodic movements, that lived only for a brief space. And it should be noted, as has been elsewhere well said, that "All the exertions of honourable committees for the improvement of psalmody and teachers of music did nothing whatever for the re-

vival of musical education." The direct result of all of these efforts seems to have been an increase in the number of tunes collected and sung in the churches. Only this and nothing more.

DIFFIDENT COMPOSERS.

It will probably never be definitely known whether or not it was an excess of modesty that prevented the "makers" of Psalm tunes for the old-time precentor from "labelling" their productions. The oldest and best of the more famous makers of violins were ever careful to affix their signatures to the instruments which passed through their hands—why did not the composers of Psalm tunes follow their example? Theorising on the subject is useless, however. The fact remains; and in numerous cases we are left to deplore the apparent lack of interest and enthusiasm on the part of those early psalmodists who have left us no means of identifying their work. On the other hand, and again in numerous instances, the omission may be taken philosophically and readily enough forgiven, for, in too many cases, it is better that "piles" of "the music of the Psalm tunes of other days" should be for ever lost to the world and their authors' names relegated to oblivion. Not infrequently, a tune was "built" on a phrase of some "profane" song, taken from probably an equally profane opera! But even that may be freely

pardoned, for how often do we hear voluntaries played on the organs in the churches that are—to put it mildly— of extremely "doubtful" origin?

Then, again, the editors of "musick bookes," "psalters," and "psalmodies" (when they did begin to adhibit names of composers to certain of the tunes) were not careful to set down correct particulars, or verify the information they vouchsafed; and this loose habit led to considerable confusion for many a day. In this connection, the hearty thanks of all interested in Scottish Psalmody are due to Mr James Love, Falkirk, for the eminently serviceable work on "Scottish Church Music" he compiled and edited. The volume, published by Messrs Blackwood and Sons in 1891, has cleared away much of the uncertainty of authorship and the untrustworthy character of many of the sources previously given and accepted as authoritative. Mr Love, by his arduous labours in the field of research, extending over some ten years, has done an incalculable service to all the Scottish Presbyterian Churches and their adherents. But there is still much real and implied doubt to be removed.

THE TALE OF THE OLD PSALM TUNES.

"The tunes the precentor sang" formed the integral part of his Sunday life, and no excuse need be offered for free and frank comment on at least some of the

older airs. Many of the more antique specimens that have been bequeathed as a heritage to the people of Scotland carry with them a host of hallowed associations and cherished memories. Could they but speak, these sternly grand, much-buffeted, and storm-beaten old melodies that have been sung down through the ages — now "in blood and tears"; at other times "in righteous anger or thankful joy" — what romance would they not weave into their story? The older of the old tunes, too, like their makers and singers, were forged and welded full oft in the furnace of sorrow and affliction, and amid persecution so bitter and cruel in its intensity as fortunately in our time can be but faintly imagined. And it is much to be feared that in the modern peaceful days in which "we live our quiet lives," we, too often, not only think but speak lightly of these old-world melodies. One has but to look at the massive, giant-like structural grandeur of some of them, however, to be impressed with a sense of their greatness. Or, in vivid contrast, take the alternative gentle sweetness—that savours, indeed, of the plaintive—to be found in the minor tunes. No wonder that so many of these old airs should have been engraven, so to speak, on the hearts of the generations that have gone before.

THE OLD 124TH.

The triumphant thankfulness, the trust-

ful hope depicted in the words beginning—

Now Israel may say, and that truly,

are vividly reflected in the music of the tune set to them. Some, indeed, do not hesitate to assert that the "inspiration" is entirely due to the words of this "song of hope and glory." But, is it? Separate the words from the music, or wed them to new music, and where would be the grandeur? The undoubted popularity of the tune dates as far away in the past as 1582. Calderwood, in his history, thus refers to the effect it had even in those remote times. The occasion was the return to Edinburgh of Rev. John Durie after banishment—

John Durie cometh to Leith at night, the 3rd September. Upon Tuesday the 4th September, as he is coming to Edinburgh, there met him at the Gallowgreen 200, but ere he came to the Netherbow their number increased to 400; but they were no sooner entered but they increased to 600 or 700, and within short space the whole street was replenished even to St Geiles Kirk; the number was estimated 2000. At the Netherbow they took up the 124 Psalme, and sung in such a pleasant tune in fourparts, known to the most part of the people, that coming up the street all bareheaded till they entered in the Kirk, with such a great sound and majestic, that it moved both themselves and all the huge multitude of the beholders, looking out at the shots and over stairs, with admiration and astonishment; the Duke of Lennox himself beheld, and reave his beard for anger; he was more affeared of this sight than

anie thing that ever he had seene before in Scotland.

The Old 124th dates back to 1551, and then appeared in the Genevan Psalter. It has ever since found a place in psalters and tune books.

ST PAUL.

This old favourite has a local history that gives it special prominence. So far as can be ascertained, St Paul was first "discovered" and included in a collection published in Aberdeen in 1748-49 by James Chalmers, sen., the founder of the "Aberdeen Journal." The work in which St Paul (air and bass) first appears has the tune set to Psalm lxv., verse 3. This collection of tunes by Chalmers would appear to have been taken chiefly from various old psalters, probably including those of Este, Ravenscroft, and Andro Hart. The authorship of St Paul, however, is still unknown. Is it possible that it may have been "home-made"?

A LIST OF TUNES OF THE PERIOD.

The following quaint table of tunes was put into circulation about the middle of the eighteenth century:—

Key.	No.	Name.	Parts.	Time.	Character.	Psalm.
Cheerful or sharp.	1.	Ahindon	3	Com...	Cheerful and solemn..	90.1
	2.	C. Psalm, L.M.	3	Com...	Cheerful and solemn..	100.1
	3.	Zealand	4	Triple.	Cheerful and lively..	149.1
	4.	Kidderminster	4	,,	Very cheerful	103.1
	5.*	Fintray	3	,,	Ex. of great joy	33.1
	6.*	Monymusk	3	,,	Very cheerful	84.1
	7.*	Paradise	4	Com...	Grand and cheerful..	98.1
	8.	St Matthew's	3	Triple.	Pastoral and lively ..	23.1
	9.	St Ann's	3	Com...	Pastl. exp. of longing..	63.1
	10.	Alkhorpe	3	,,	Solemn	24.3
	11.	Colchester	4	Triple.	Lively and grand	150.1
	12.*	Kintore	4	Com...	V. grand and cheerful.	98.4
	13.	Lond'n New, N'ton	3	,,	Grand	104.1
Melancholy or flat.	14.	Dundee	3	,,	Complaining	13.1
	15.	Rugby	3	Triple.	Melancholy	42.1
	16.	Hartford	4	,,	Penitential	51.1
	17.*	Rayne	3	,,	Mrnfl., supplicatory ..	102.1
	18.	Bangor	3	Com...	Deeply mournful	55.1

* New tunes.

It is interesting to note that none of the then "new" tunes are now known or heard.

MARTYRDOM.

The story of Martyrdom, another genuine favourite, and its composer, as set forth by Mr James Love, may be briefly summarised. Hugh Wilson was born at Fenwick, Ayrshire, in 1764. He received his education at the village school, and afterwards learned the shoemaking trade with his father, John Wilson. In "spare time" he applied himself with energy to the study of mathematics and kindred subjects. A favourite pastime was the making of sun-dials. Now and then he would lead the psalmody in the Secession Church of Fenwick; and added to his income by

teaching rudimentary education and music. He afterwards removed to Pollokshaws, where he held an important situation in a mill for several years. Wilson died on 14th August, 1824, and was buried in the churchyard of Old Kilpatrick. So much for the man. The tune Martyrdom was composed by Wilson while he stayed at Fenwick, and was first named after that village. It was originally written in common time, and was first published with the air and bass only. Another circumstance connected with the tune is worthy of some little notice. Martyrdom was more than once the subject of a legal and antiquarian dispute. The tune became the private property of a Glasgow music teacher, John Robertson by name. Subsequently it was published by, among others, R. A. Smith, without permission; and, in order to cover up the delinquency as it were, the measure was changed from common to triple time, and described as "partly borrowed from an old Covenanting melody." When the case came up for hearing, two witnesses—John and Robert Fulton, brothers—were able to prove that Wilson was the composer. John Fulton, indeed, "had a share in writing the bass part." The Sheriff decided that the copyright of the tune Martyrdom or Fenwick was vested in Robertson, and that Wilson was the composer.

THE PSALMS AND THEIR TUNES.

With every desire to be justly generous and sympathetic in estimating the work of the byegone Scottish precentor, one has to confess to a feeling that the old man was not always quite so consistent as he might have been. He had keenly conscientious scruples, we know, about using the Psalms while practising his tunes, and so he and his friends made commonplace rhymes to take the place of the "Bible words." But the precentor was not so scrupulously careful of the tunes. Of course, it may have been that he was ignorant of the sources of inspiration tapped in order to provide him with airs! It would be interesting to know how he would have accounted for the strong family resemblance of several of his Church tunes to the melodies of "sang strouds." How, for instance, could he have squared his conscience to the extraordinary likeness between St Paul and "Rule Britannia"; or St George's, Edinburgh, and "Since first I saw your face"? To bring similar comparisons to date, we find the favourite hymn tune Aurelia marvellously like "Auld Robin Gray," while Nenthorn is reminiscent of "Maggie Lauder," St Olave is redolent of "Willie brewed a peck o' maut," and so on, ad lib.

Fortunately, to us of the present time, these resemblances convey nothing derogatory to the tunes. One thing they

prove conclusively, however. Melody has, after all, its confines or limits, and when the word "original" is nowadays applied to a "new" air, we may reasonably console ourselves—that the melody has "been done before." But perhaps the chief point to be emphasised relates to the comparative terms "sacred" and "secular" as applied to music. These terms are misnomers. There are in reality but two classes of music—"good" and "bad"—and the pity is that the "sacred" and "secular" appellations continue so much in evidence.

NEIL DOUGALL.

The imitative qualities have not been always prominent, however. In the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth lived the composer of one of the finest congregational tunes ever written. This was Neil Dougall, the son of a Greenock wright, whose life is romantic enough to be given here in condensed form. Neil's father was a victim of the press-gang of the time, having been impressed into the service of his country when the boy was quite young. The father died in Ceylon when the son was but four years of age. Neil and his mother removed to Cartsdyke, and here the lad was kept at school till he was fifteen. In 1791, he was apprenticed as a sailor on board the ship Britannia, and sailed several voyages to New York. War

broke out with France in 1793, and Neil joined a little ship known as the Clarence Yacht. The vessel was fitted up with ten guns, and the captain procured a letter of marque "authorising him to make reprisals on the high seas."

The 14th day of June, 1794, was fated to be a memorable one in the history of our young hero. News reached the seaport of the great victory obtained by Lord Howe over the French fleet, and all armed vessels were promptly instructed to fire a general salute. Captain Mathie, the skipper of the Clarence Yacht, was a most loyal subject, and was enthusiastic over the rejoicings. It thus came about that a salute was to be fired from the miniature ship. The crew consisted of the captain, mate, and three apprentices, one of whom was Neil Dougall. The remainder of the story may be told in another's words—

Neil was ready, match in hand, to fire one of the guns, when the captain hailed an old man-of-war's-man, who was looking on, and asked him to lend a hand. This he did. Taking the match from Neil, he fired the gun. Ready for duty, the apprentice sprang on the gun carriage and sponged the gun; but the touch-hole had not been stopped, and a spark was left in the gun. Proceeding to re-load, Neil was in the acting of ramming home a cartridge consisting of three pounds of gunpowder when it went off, carrying away his right hand and the other portion of his arm to the elbow, tearing the flesh off his right cheek, and depriving him of his eyesight.

At first it was hoped that a partial recovery of his left eye might be secured, but an eminent oculist pronounced this impossible. In the sad circumstances, Dougall was urged to study music, and so successful was he—under the tuition of Mr Robert Duncan, precentor of the East Parish Church, Greenock—that he opened a singing class in the autumn of 1799, which was continued regularly, year by year, till 1844, when, in consequence of infirmity and the breakdown of his voice, he had, perforce, to abandon teaching. His compositions consist of about a hundred psalm tunes, an anthem, and about a score of songs and other pieces. Neil Dougall died at Greenock on October 1, 1862. His tune Kilmarnock will keep his memory green. Morven—attributed, rightly or wrongly, to R. A. Smith—was much in vogue in Dougall's day, and so he set about building a tune on the same pattern. Morven, it may be explained—without too much technicality—is a creation on what is known as the Caledonian scale. That is, the fourth and seventh of the scale are omitted in the melody. "We'll christen't Kilmarnock," he said to his friend R. A. Smith, who had been the means of unearthing it from a scrap drawer in Dougall's house.

A COMPARISON.

It is, of course, much to be regretted that the taste for good music, especially for

Reduced Fac-Simile from the Skene MS., 1620.

Church music, did not continue, and that an effort to keep up the standard was not—as is proved in the records of the time—maintained. W. S. Rockstro, in an article on Hymn Tunes in England, says—

English hymnody was not destined to remain for any length of time in the high state of cultivation indicated by the collections of Este and Ravenscroft. Step by step the decadence of the hymn tune kept pace with that of the madrigal, which had once done so much towards preparing the way for its more perfect development. Had any hope of a revival existed it would have been dispelled by the Great Rebellion. The Restoration did nothing towards the resuscitation of the failing art. The vigorous treatment of the Old Masters faded gradually into vague inanity. The tunes of Hayes, Wainwright, Carey, and other more modern writers are as far inferior to those of their predecessors as those of their followers are to them. The popular taste grew daily more and more corrupt until about the beginning of the last century it reached a depth of degradation beneath which it would seem impossible that it could ever sink. At that hopeless level it remained for many years. Not a few may remember when the most popular hymn tune in England, that known as "Helmsley," set to the hymn, "Lo! He comes with clouds descending," was an air of so secular a character that it had probably been composed to some amatory verse, beginning "Guardian angels now protect me, send me back the youth I love," sung by Mistress Pippin, and danced as a hornpipe at Sadler's Wells. The real objection to such melodies as this lies less in their origin than in their esoteric unfitness for the purpose to which they

are so inappropriately applied. The one may in time be forgotten—the other, never.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

In these enlightened days we are inclined to smile broadly at the eccentricities of the old precentor, forgetting that he had many good points. Even much of the music he used is now sneered at, although in this respect we find history repeating itself. During the reign of "Good Queen Bess," Dr Christopher Tye, an eminent musician, set himself the task of composing music for the Acts of the Apostles. It was a formidable undertaking, truly, but the doctor plodded through fourteen chapters ere he acknowledged the enormity of the subject and gave it up. The title-page of the work when it was published sufficiently indicated the composer's reasons for undertaking such an apparently absolutely endless task. It reads—

> The Actes of the Apostles, translated into Englyshe meeter, and dedicated to the Kynge's most excellente majestye, by Christfer Tye, doctor in musyke, and one of the gentylmen of hys grace's most honourable chapell, with notes to eche chapter, to synge, and also to playe upon the flute, very necessary for studentes after their studye, to syte theyr wythes and alsoe for all Christians that cannot synge, to read the good and godlye storyes of the lives of Christ and his disciples.

The following verse (the first of the fourteenth chapter) will suffice to show the

"improvements" made on the usual reading in order to get the Scripture into "Englyshe Meeter"—it is strongly reminiscent of our own metrical version of the Psalms—

It chanced in Iconium
As they oft-times dyd use
Together they into dyd come
The synagogue of Jues!
When they dyd preache and only seke
God's grace them to atcheve,
That they so spake to Jue and Greke
That manye dyd beleve.

The cry of composers nowadays is for "words that furnish some inspiration." What would they do if confined to such a libretto? A recent writer says:—

Those were the days of counterpoint, of musical mathematics; and the composer wrote his vocal fugue without reference to the sentiment of the words. Though Handel wrote a great deal that was expressive of feeling, it would be difficult to find much sentiment in some of his works. They are simply fugues, set to words, to be sure, but essentially instrumental in character. No one would think of writing that style of vocal music nowadays.

Perhaps! But if "the day of writing instrumental music for voices is past," we have in its place vocal music that cannot be agreeably heard through the "blare" and noise of instrumental accompaniment. We have a modern setting of "The Apostles"—altogether different from that of Christopher Tye. If there be more

dramatic realism than is altogether necessary, it cannot be said that Elgar's music ever lacks dignity or reverent sincerity.

LENGTHY SINGINGS.

In the days immediately preceding the general introduction of the organ, when a hymn of ten or twelve verses, of—say—four or six lines each, was given out on a Sunday, the members of the congregation not infrequently looked askance at each other, while the choir "proceeded to business" with a more or less martyr-like resignation. They evidently overlooked the fact that it was by means of multiple verse that the ancients were spurred on to heroic deeds!

Plutarch has put on record that Solon composed an elegy, "consisting of an hundred verses in length," which he forthwith proceeded to sing, and so excited the Athenians that they "almost immediately" went to war with the Megarians. The story may be readily enough accepted. To come to much later times, we are told that at the famous battle of Drumclog the Covenanters charged to the words and music of the Hundredth Psalm, "oft repeated." A comparison as between long sermons and long singing thus becomes somewhat interesting. The effects produced are contrastive. In the one case, human feeling may be roused to a pitch of warlike ardour that brooks no restraint; while the ser-

mon, on the other hand, soothes and lulls the spirit of war into a peace that usually ends in tranquil sleep! Again, in still more modern times, and indeed till within very recent years, our Highland regiments were goaded on to fight by the skirl of the bagpipe. It would, perhaps, be invidious, if not really dangerous, to hazard an opinion as to which of the two P's—the Psalms or the "Pipes"—were most effective as incitements to war.

The old Puritan and Calvinistic psalm-singers, however, outdid the Greeks in the matter of "lengthy argument." In a very old Scottish Psalter, Psalm cxix.—the whole 176 verses—is set to a somewhat lugubrious tune that meanders, verse after verse, through many weary pages of the book. A recent English writer, commenting on this, says—

> We may well believe that a people who could stand such doses as this could readily enough burn their neighbours at the stake for witchcraft. Matters have happily changed, however, since these early days, and there is this now to say in favour of Scottish psalm singing—the quantity to be used at any one "sitting" has been considerably reduced to a reasonable number of verses. But think of a sederunt of 176 verses!

Of course, that is a purely English criticism.

THE GREGORIAN CHANT.

There have been musical antagonisms in

all ages, however, since the science was known. Church and State have been embroiled as well as the rank and file of the people. It thus came about in the very early history of the Churches that French and Roman singers had a dispute on the occasion of a visit of Charlemagne to Rome. The potentate took his choir with him; and with little delay the Gallic singers began a controversy with the choristers of the Roman Church—the former claiming to sing better and more agreeably than the Italians.

The Romans, however, knew that they could trace their style of music direct from St Gregory, and accordingly accused the Gauls of corrupting and disfiguring the true ecclesiastical mode. The dispute ultimately waxed so warm that King Charles thought it necessary to end the hostilities. He summoned his own singers to meet him, and queried them somewhat in this manner—"Whether is the water of a fountain purest at its source, or after it has run a considerable distance, and been contaminated with other streams?" The reply came quickly—"The nearer to the source the purer the water." On this the King exclaimed—"Mount ye then up to the pure fountain of St Gregory, whose chant ye have manifestly corrupted." Later, the King ordered all singing masters in the kingdom to be taught by the Roman monks and to conform their books and

teaching to the Gregorian antiphonal. Thus was the seed sown that has born such excellent fruit in our Church music of to-day.

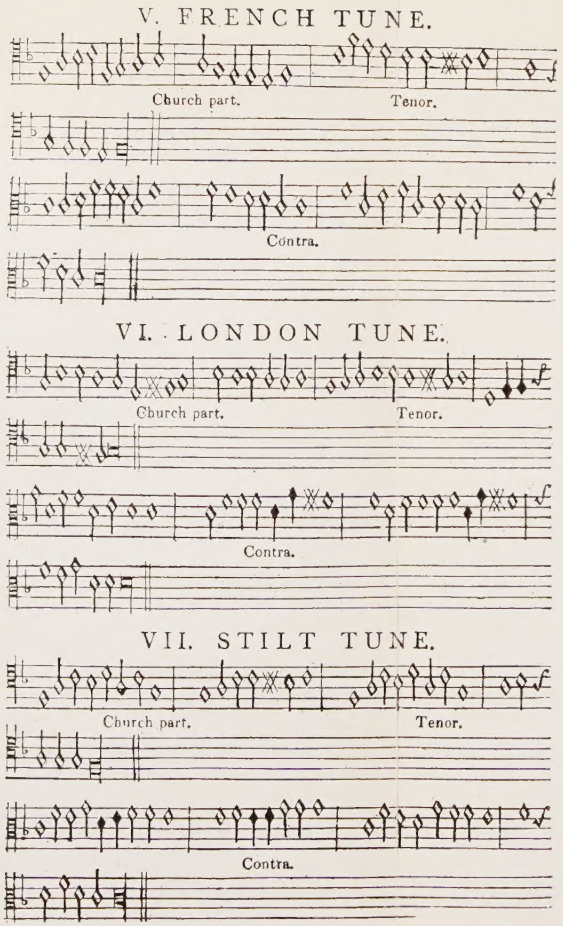
NON-MUSICAL CLERGY.

It has ever been an unfortunate circumstance that the clergy—with few notable exceptions—are non-musical. In inverse fashion it can equally truthfully be retorted that all musicians are not religious.

An apocryphal story is told of a priest's ignorance of the musical characters in the antiphonal and breviary. His knowledge of note values, pitch indications, and musical signs generally was absolutely nil. He was shown a breviary, dated 1692, where the notation was virtually the same as in the service book of his own time. The C clef looked very similar to a double square note, or two notes joined together. What worried the old father was how it could ever be expected that a man could sing two notes at once. Vivaldi was a priest of different calibre. In addition to playing the violin, he was also, in his way, a composer. It is related of this good m .n that once, when officiating at Mass, a musical idea occurred to him, and not wishing to lose it, he abruptly left the altar and the church, jotted it down, returned to his place, and resumed the service. He was taken to task for such an unpardonable offence and deposed. His bishop, who had evidently a soft spot in his heart for the

musical art and its followers, cast about for an excuse to restore the erring priest to his post. The excuse was certainly original. "Being a musician," the bishop said, "he (the priest) could not have been in his right mind." The conclusion was more flattering to the kindness of heart of this "head of the Church" than it was to the general musician!

Parpola, Haydn's teacher, it is said, once made a sad blunder through his ignorance of Latin. In setting the creed to music, he thus arranged the words—"Credo, non credo, non credo in Deum." The authorities were shocked by such sentiment expressed in a Church service, and it was only by explaining that he was ignorant as to Latin, and that he did not really mean to say that he did not trust in God, that he saved himself from the terrors of the Inquisition. Yet in our day how many are grinding out Church music that is said to "combine poor poetry, bad music, and worse theology."



FAC-SIMILE OF JOHN KNOX'S PSALTER, 1655.

It will be noted that two parts read one way and the other two the opposite way, so that one book laid upon the table of the old-fashioned square pew served four persons, each singing his own part.

Biographical.

Biographical.

THE PRECENTOR'S TRIALS.

In reading Church and Council minutes containing accounts of appointments of precentors, one is struck by the invariable use of the word "trials." The precentor, poor fellow, evidently had not "his sorrows to seek" in those days! His "trials" came to him, without solicitation on his part. In connection with the city churches, the mode of procedure seems to have been for the Town Council to nominate a committee of "gentlemen for taking trials." These trials were very varied apparently, for there were "competitive," "comparative" —and doubtless "superlative"—trials of candidates. The examination tests, it is to be feared, were frequently poor, perfunctory affairs. Indeed, it could hardly be otherwise, for the examiners, in too many instances, had more need to be examined themselves than to attempt the precarious operation upon others. In country districts, the peripatetic "teacher of music" was only too willing, "for a consideration," to put candidates for the precentorship through their facings. But this plan had its drawbacks, for the working

music master frequently took advantage of his position to place a favourite pupil in the lateran, whatever were the latter's merits or demerits musically. Much harm undoubtedly resulted from this reprehensible practice, and on the face of it, it must have had a discouraging and retarding, not to say down-grade, effect on the class of men whose ambition it was to "lead" the singing.

EARLY EAST KIRK PRECENTORS.

One of the earliest precentors of note in the East Parish Church was Mr Alexander Mather, who was appointed in 1773. Mr Mather was a greatly respected man, and "by virtue of his gentleness of demeanour and his courteous and gentlemanly bearing" much endeared himself to the flock who worshipped in the East. By profession Mr Mather was a schoolmaster, but like many another dominie of his day he was but soberly remunerated for his work. From a minute dated "1797, March 10th," we learn that Mr Alexander Mather applied to the Town Council for an augmentation of salary. In his petition he pointed out that he had been "precentor of the Psalm and Master of the School for 24 years." The Council, after consideration, "agreed to advance Mr Mather's salary as schoolmaster to 200 merks Scots and a like sum as precentor of the East Church." But the kindly old man was fast declining —his day was far spent. To add to his

other infirmities, his eyesight failed him, and he became almost blind. So in less than six months he again petitioned the Council, and, after explaining his physical inability to remain longer in office in the church, he desired the Council to "nominate and pay an assistant precentor." The Council, thereafter, "in view of Mr Thomas Keard being a person of very conspicuous merit and qualifications in music, unanimously elected, nominated, and appointed the said Thomas Keard to be Precentor of the Psalm in the East Church, from and after that date—during the Council's pleasure—at the salary of £15." At the same time, "taking into consideration the great age and long services of Alexander Mather in both offices — Precentor and Master of the School—and that he cannot maintain and support his family without the continuance of his present salary (as precentor) of 200 merks Scots, they therefore unanimously agree to pay him during his life the aforesaid 200 merks Scots." Mr Mather has been characterised as "a grave, sweet singer, who accomplished his work in a modest but dignified manner, and who made many friends and had not a living (!) enemy." His period of service was from 1773 to 1797. He died a year or two after his retirement.

MR THOMAS KEARD.

Mr Mather's successor did not reign long. In less than twelve months, "Mr

Keard, after being several times rebuked by the ministers—Dr Gordon and Dr Ross —for being repeatedly intoxicated, but without any appreciable effect," was, on 18th September, 1799, "unanimously discharged and dismissed" by the Town Council. Whatever may have been Mr Keard's moral failures, musically he must have been a strong man for his time. His singing bore most favourable comparison to, and was in several respects reminiscent of, that of William Maxwell Shaw, who became precentor of the West Kirk in 1797. Keard was also a candidate for this appointment, and it is significant that the committee of "judges" "earnestly recommended to the patronage of the Magistrates, on some other occasion, Mr Thomas Keard."

MR WILLIAM COWIE.

Following Mr Keard came Mr William Cowie, who for 22 years faithfully served the East Church people. Previous to his appointment to the East Church lateran, on 11th December, 1799, Mr Cowie precented for six years in Greyfriars Church. Musically, Mr Cowie does not seem to have been a success. He had a "shakkin' vice," of not particularly unblemished quality. An excerpt from the report of the Town Council on his appointment gives some interesting particulars. It reads—"The gentlemen appointed by the Council for

taking trials of the candidates report that the major part of the judges were of opinion that William Cowie, journeyman wright in Aberdeen, was the first and best qualified for the office; and that James Clark, thread-lapper in Aberdeen, was the second and next qualified after the said William Cowie." Mr Cowie was "unanimously elected at a salary of £15." In consequence of the vacancy caused by his transference, James Clark—"the second and next," as mentioned above — was "appointed to fill the vacancy in Greyfriars at a salary of £6."

All through the 22 years during which William Cowie precented in the East Kirk, the singing seems to have gone down and down till it reached a very low ebb indeed. His services never met with much acceptance, and he seems to have had little or no encouragement. It was said in defence of the congregation's position that "they had not the advantage of much artistic skill in their leader; nevertheless he got on fairly well!" Mr Cowie, during the latter part of his life, taught a venture school, frequented by not a few sailors. He plumed himself on his elocutionary powers, which he would display in the winter Sunday afternoons when he "read out the line" by the light of a couple of candles, "which with the like number twinkling in the pulpit, were all that served to make darkness visible in the venerable kirk."

The tunes used by "William" in the

East Church were of a plain and austere type, and formed a distinct contrast to those sung by Mr John Knott in the West Kirk. Some tunes there were, indeed, that Mr Cowie, daring singer as he was—chiefly when left to himself and in his own estimation—would not have had the boldness to raise in the old edifice. Blackburn, for instance, made William look grave at the suggestion that he should sing such a tune as "that." One Sunday, Rev. Robert Doig gave out one of the versions of Psalm cxlviii.—involving what was known in those days as a "kittle" measure. The psalm had "never been known to have been sung in the kirk before," and the precentor was greatly perturbed in spirit. In fact, he was utterly confounded and "in sair tribulation" when the "peculiar" measure was read over. Recovering himself quickly, however, and knowing that no one in the congregation could join in, he screwed up his courage and started the proper tune—a lively lilt with numerous repeats—to the amazement and bewilderment of the congregation, who looked upon such a demonstration as provocative of nothing short of a judgment!

MR WILLIAM MAITLAND.

Mr William Maitland was appointed assistant and successor to Mr William Cowie in the East Church. Mr Maitland carried

Mr. Stafford Bushnell, LL.D., Oxford.

Well known to local precentors in the seventies and eighties.

(*Photo. by Wilson, Aberdeen.*)

on the business of a bootmaker in Union Street for a number of years.

His precentorship began in 1821 and continued till 1827—about six years. As precentor, Mr Maitland does not seem to have excelled or charmed in the graces of voice or manner. Indeed, his facial contortions seem to have excited considerable amusement. As an editor, however, Mr Maitland holds an important place in the local music of the Church. His work, "The Aberdeen Psalmody," published in 1823, obtained a very considerable hold, and for many years was the popular tune book. Despite all the faults that the modernist may find with the publication, Maitland's "Psalmody" is a very decided step in advance of anything preceding it, and it must have been a great help in those early days. The youth of the time must have profited by a study of its table of transpositions, its time lessons, its examples of major and minor keys, and its lessons in intervals. The work was excellently produced, having been printed direct from well-engraved plates. It is worthy of note that two of the tunes appearing in Maitland's "Psalmody" were the work of Mr James Middleton, a teacher of music in the city, from about 1820 till 1855. The tunes are named East Church and St Nicholas. Both are now obsolete.

Other Old Precentors.

MR ARCHIBALD GORDON.

Towards the end of 1820, Mr Archibald Gordon was "nominated and appointed" precentor of St Clement's Parish Church. "Archie" — by which familiar appellation he seems to have been best known—was a weaver to trade, and a quaint, old-fashioned specimen at that. He wore a queue, carefully stored away inside his hat —when wearing the headgear — but in church the "tail" was somewhat ostentatiously adjusted and displayed, falling carefully over the "deep" collar of his coat. He was an energetic body, but lacking in general knowledge. He conducted classes, purporting to teach "the science of reading music at sight"—not at first sight, however, it may be presumed! Archie, it would appear, was most anxious to instruct the female members of the congregation to sing the melody of the tunes, and also to get some of them to sing "seconds," or alto. His list of tunes was restricted, and, Dr Thomson, the minister of the church, selected them. In giving out the Psalm, the worthy doctor also added the name of the tune; and it should be observed that

the same tune did duty, perhaps, two or three times on a Sunday.

Then Archie would get to his feet, "read the line," and break into Stroudwater, Devizes, or London New. He was jealous of his post, this old precentor, and chary about allowing anyone to take duty for him—in case of a breakdown. With all this commendable care, Archie "fell" one Sunday. In the interval between the morning and afternoon diets of worship, he met a cronie, who suggested "refreshment" of a liquid nature. They "liquidated," it is to be inferred, not wisely but too well, for Archie reached the lateran in the afternoon displaying an observable "list to port." He got on all right, and concluded—"The prayers of this congregation are requested on behalf of——" without a hitch. Then Archie composed himself, so to speak, "an ode to sleep"—with the usual nasal and throat accompaniments. The "finally and lastly" found him still in the arms of Morpheus. But an obliging young man in the church essayed to lead the singing, and raised the tune. That music, under ordinary circumstances, does "soothe the savage breast" may not now be disputed, but in this instance it roused Archie from his slumbers —only to find he had been forestalled. He grew desperate, and made every endeavour to "get haud o' the tune," but without success. Poor fellow! he was suspended

for this offence, but, following "admonishment," was reinstated. Archie's salary was £3 per annum!

MR WILLIAM DON.

Another notable occupant of the lateran for twenty years in Aberdeen was Mr William Don. Mr Don was first appointed precentor of St Nicholas Lane Church in 1821; in 1826, we find him officiating at Oldmachar Cathedral; and in Union Church, Shiprow, he took office in 1831. Here he remained for ten years. Mr Don was a man of fine physique, tall and handsome in appearance. He was the possessor of a rich, round bass voice—one of the class that "filled the kirk." He was impressed with a due sense of the dignity of his position on Sunday, for he invariably wore the gown. Mr Don, too, was a member of Mr James Davie's choir, which, in 1834, caused such a sensation at the first musical festival ever held in Aberdeen. "Since when" —it may truthfully be said—"there has been no other." A bright example of everything praiseworthy in character and conduct, Mr Don made himself a great favourite in musical circles. He was a most pleasurable companion—"could tell a capital story or sing a good song." Mr Don died in 1866.

PRECENTORS AND PRECENTORS.

It cannot be claimed that Aberdeen—even including the shire—has produced

such famous men as Robert Archibald Smith, John Templeton, John Wilson, and David Kennedy. But it must be remembered that it is not as precentors that these men are best remembered or their memories most revered. R. A. Smith has bequeathed us a wealth of melody that cannot be forgotten, or even neglected or set aside; and has thus left his impress on musical history. Templeton's brilliant operatic career and professional association with Malibran have secured for him an honoured place among "the great in song." And probably in no lesser degree stands John Wilson, who also added lustre to, and won bright laurels on, the operatic stage. To their credit, these great artistes never "forgot" their nationality, or that there was a "routh" of native music with which they could charm Scotsmen the world o'er. Kennedy, too, made his mark as a great exponent of Scottish song—worthy, indeed, to follow in the footsteps of his two famous predecessors, if not to rank equal with them as a singer of the national ballads.

But, if Aberdeenshire has not sent out any such notable executants, it can at least be said for it that, in its long list of capable—if not great—precentors there is a considerable number of men who have proved types, in best sense, of the occupant of the "desk" throughout Scotland. For this reason more than any

other, the examples and "samples" of precentors already given, and those about to follow, have been selected.

MR ALEXANDER KEARD.

For the long period of 29 years, Mr Alexander Keard held the office of precentor in Trinity Chapel (now church), dying practically at his post at a very advanced age. Mr Keard, it would appear, had a bass-baritone voice of a very pronounced, reedy character—i.e., he was a "rasper." But he led the congregation with considerable success notwithstanding His tune range was very limited, but contained a sufficient selection to please the people of Trinity. A curious arrangement of the choir existed in the church—the members being seated in the "backmost" seats of the front gallery. The arrangement was not detrimental to the singing! Mr Keard seems to have been an intelligent enough man, albeit he every Sunday morning opened the service with St Paul. What the congregation thought of such a proceeding—continued as it was for many months—has not been recorded. He must have got a broad hint, however, for one Sunday French took the place of St Paul and remained in the position for a couple of months! The tune book used was known as Maitland's —a favourite local work of the day; but as a variation Missionary—unknown to the present generation—with its long bass

solo, was occasionally used. Mr Keard introduced what was looked on as a novelty in connection with such tunes as Orton, Staughton, and Condescension. This consisted of a "repeat" of the last two lines. The first time the third and fourth lines were sung—it was piano; in repeating, the choir and congregation "came home" to a romping forte. A successful teacher, Mr Keard was at one time engaged to instruct the choir of St Peter's Roman Catholic Church in Justice Street.

The story is told of Mr Keard that, on the occasion of a visit of Lord Brougham to Aberdeen, he and a few other male singers were engaged to sing several glees and catches at a public banquet. When covers were removed, the "sangsters" opened with "Non, nobis Domine." It will probably never be known whether "the man whom Aberdonians delighted to honour" had an ear for music or not. If so, it must have been greatly startled, if not shocked, by the sounds emitted by these "select" vocalists. "Saw trimming," the chronicler sarcastically adds, "would have formed a pleasing contrast!" Mr Keard was a man of convivial habits, and occasionally "looked upon the wine when it was red," but even with this failing, he died greatly esteemed and regretted.

MR PETER GELLAN.

In the early years of last century the most popular—as he was the most power-

ful—preacher in Aberdeen was Rev. James Kidd (afterwards Dr Kidd), minister of Gilcomston Chapel, or "the Chapel o' Ease." With such a notable man as pastor, it behoved that the church should also have as precentor a strong representative; and this Gilcomston possessed, from about 1815 to 1830, in the person of Peter Gellan. It should here be mentioned that the congregation of Gilcomston were essentially working people, and wages in those days were small compared with what they are now. Peter Gellan's salary was, therefore, to use a local colloquialism, "nae ill to cairy hame." It partly consisted of clothing, the balance being made up in money. About this period, payment by clothing was still popular, having been "carried forward," in poorer congregations, from remote times. "Peter" was one of John Knott's more celebrated pupils, and was the possessor of a "big," sonorous voice of considerable compass and power. He had a capacious mouth, which, when open, "seemed to extend from ear to ear." But Peter had a great command of the congregation, and, next to the minister, was "the most popular man who went in and out among them." Though not in any sense a cultured man, Gellan displayed great force of character, and thus popularised himself among his fellows. His conduct of the psalmody may be best described as "rough and ready,"

or probably on special occasions as "more rough than ready." And it has been suggested that Peter was inclined to "exaggerate to some extent the vulgarities of style of the day."

Dr Kidd, we are told, preached three times every Sunday, and, if Gellan took his due share of the responsibilities of his office, the first day of the week must have been a busy one for him. The congregational singing in Gilcomston was hearty enough, but there was little of what is termed "praise in parts." There was no choir, but the precentor was in this case assisted by a somewhat diminutive specimen of humanity, Sandy W—, otherwise "Singin' Sandy." He was a kindly little body, but with a poor, weak voice, and the combination of strength and weakness, as displayed by "the precentor and his man," must have been amusing, if not absolutely ludicrous. Sandy's voice was alto, but so thin that it was of no earthly use to lead the congregation. Dr Kidd, it may be inferred, must have listened impatiently, for his sympathies were all in the direction of power and might. He was always "vastly glad," we are told, "to encourage his people to exercise their voices to the utmost stretch." His idea of the fitness of things seems to have been summed up in the words —"Make a 'joyful' noise" by all means, but "make a noise." Peter Gellan retired

in 1830, and was followed by Mr John Wood, paper-ruler, Queen Street.

MR WILLIAM D. KENWARD.

The salary offered by the West Church —or the Town Council through that Church —must have been a considerable attraction for those who aspired to the lateran in that building—judging by the number of applicants. On 12th April, 1824, it is recorded that Provost Brown reported on the applications received in response to an advertisement in the "Aberdeen Journal" and Edinburgh, Newcastle, and York newspapers. Among others, the name of William Daniel Kenward, chorister of the Cathedral of Durham, and teacher of vocal music there, was favourably commented on, and mention made that he "appeared to have much skill and taste in the knowledge and execution of vocal music, both sacred and otherways," and that he should "be appointed to fill the vacancy." Mr Kenward had produced "ample" certificates from, among others, Dr Camidge, of York—the then organist of Durham Cathedarl—as to his abilities as a singer and his moral character! He was, as was the custom of the day, "unanimously" elected to the office at a salary of £30, with an additional sum of £15 "allowed for transporting himself and family."

Well-educated and accomplished, Mr Kenward soon made a name for himself in

the north. He had a small choir assisting him, the members of which were principally boys from Gordon's Hospital, who sang the treble part. Mr Kenward was a capable and thorough teacher, and at his annual concert was wont to electrify his audience by a rendering of Braham's "The Anchor's Weighed." He edited a collection known as "The Scottish Psalm and Tune Book," which contains a very florid tune of his own composition, named Lewes. After seeing this tune, it is not at all surprising to learn that, among his other accomplishments, Mr Kenward was in the habit of introducing the "trill" or "shake" in his church music as a special feature. The congregation, remarkable to say, "tholed" this adornment simply "because he could perform it perfectly." Mr Kenward left the West Church in 1828 to fill a similar appointment in the High Church, Edinburgh.

MR WILLIAM SIMPSON.

It is somewhat difficult to understand why the West Church people alternated their selection of precentors, but following Mr Kenward came a local man, with not a tithe of the theoretical or executive ability of the Englishman. Mr William Simpson was a native, educated at Gordon's Hospital. He served an apprenticeship as a druggist, and was afterwards in business for several years on his own

account, but with apparently small success. Mr Simpson had a voice of rare natural excellence and beauty. Indeed, it is said that "his grand tenor surpassed in richness the voices of his two immediate predecessors." But, as has been hinted, Mr Simpson's scientific acquirements were somewhat limited. He had, however, attained a great local celebrity—this, perhaps, on account of his social qualities. He was a favourite song-singer, and much sought after at convivial gatherings.

There was a small choir in the West Church to assist in leading the praise, and for the first time several members of the choir were paid for their services; and this admirable custom of paying the chief singers is still continued. Mr Simpson invariably sang the melody of the tunes, while his choir—including, as usual, boys from Gordon's Hospital—filled in the harmony, softly, as an accompaniment. Mr Simpson introduced, as a special feature, practisings on the Sunday afternoons at the close of the service. So popular did this innovation become that not only did the congregation remain, but members from other churches dropped in also to listen.

And what a treat, we are told, was it to listen to Mr Simpson as he declaimed the airs of the Old Hundredth, London New, or French, with the choir filling in the harmony in a subdued manner! This precen-

tor of the West was a most obliging man, and so we hear of him doing duty for his neighbour, Mr Webster, at the evening lectures in the East Kirk. It will thus be gathered that Mr Simpson was also somewhat advanced in his ideas regarding the music of the Church. One of his most "daring" innovations nearly cost him his appointment. On the occasion referred to, an attractive young lady came forward toward the close of the service and sang a solo. The experiment in the eyes of the congregation was doubtless novel and sensational, but cold water was promptly thrown on this form of musical display, and the experiment was not repeated. Mr Simpson gave up his business in 1831, at the same time retiring from the precentorship, and shortly thereafter left for America.

SMALL REMUNERATION.

The subject of small salaries has just been touched upon—but slightly. A short story may lead up to a reintroduction of the subject. The minister of " a sma' Buchan kirkie," the precentorship of which was worth some £10 (or probably less) a year, returning on one occasion from Peterhead, where he had been preaching, was dilating to his precentor on the fine singing he had heard. The lateranist quickly sized up the minister and the "matter." "Ah, weel," said he, "ye see,

a body would expec' meesic for forty poun', but fin it comes to ten, I think ony kin' o' squeakin' micht dee."

Anything seems to have been offered in the shape of remuneration for services rendered. For example, it was no uncommon thing for a precentor to arrange with a substitute to sing for him on a Sunday in exchange for a "full fou." The payment was not left over to a "more convenient season," but was promptly made at the close of the service. Forbes Mackenzie took no cognisance of drinking events in those days, and the shortest cut to the nearest public-house was considered the best! Indeed, the precentor of the time not infrequently left the lateran immediately before the sermon; and he and "the minister's man," instead of "sleeping through" the discourse, made themselves more "comfortable" during the hour of its delivery in the nearest dram-shop! No wonder that the closing singing went with a vir!

MR JAMES WEBSTER.

In continuing the narrative of the local precentors, Mr James Webster comes next "in direct descent." Mr Webster was a native of Inverurie, and for a short period held the office of precentor in Kemnay Parish Church. He would appear to have been a man of discernment, and not lacking in musical knowledge, for, during his

tenancy of the lateran at Kemnay he published a small collection of tunes for the use of the parish. It is of considerable importance to note that in those far-away days Kemnay, along with Inverurie, Kintore, and Monymusk, seems to have been "a happy hunting-ground" for the precentor, in so far as country districts were concerned.

Soon, however, Mr Webster had a "call" to the city—his first charge being in Greyfriars Church. He remained there only a short time, when he was translated to the East. In the East Church, Mr Webster soon became a universal favourite: this, by his pleasant singing, his good taste, courtesy, and "genteel appearance." Rev. Mr (afterwards Dr) Foote took a great interest in his new precentor, and encouraged him in every way. The minister also took a warm interest in the choir, and endeared himself greatly to the members. Mr Webster conducted his weekly practisings on Saturday evenings, and these became a cherished institution on account of "the care exercised by the precentor and his teaching tact." For the first time, anthems were introduced into the Sunday services, and altogether psalmody in the East Church showed a marked improvement under Mr Webster's stewardship. The tune book used was Maitland's. From 26th February, 1829, till nearly the same period in 1835, Mr Webster continued in

office. When he left for Montreal general regret was expressed—renewed when his death was announced in 1871.

MR ALEXANDER ROBB.

Although, legitimately speaking, Mr Alexander Robb does not come under the direct heading of precentors, his close touch with local music and musical matters warrants his name appearing here. "Deacon" Robb was, indeed, an indispensable figure in local life, and held the office of Clerk in St Andrew's Chapel from 1840 to 1851. He was a bluff-mannered man, hearty, and of almost Herculean proportions. Outspoken to a degree, it is related of the Deacon that on one occasion he criticised a sermon preached by his Bishop — Skinner — (son of "Tullochgorum") in no very complimentary terms. The words used came to the ears of the Bishop, but he —sensible man!—appeared to take no offence. One day soon after, however, he met a friend on the street, and, button-holing him, said—"What do you think Deacon Robb said about my sermon on Sunday?" The friend could not say. "Well," said the Bishop, sinking his voice, "he called it horse dung!"

Deacon Robb and William Don were fast friends, and both were members of James Davie's choir which sang at the 1834 Festival. And in this connection another tale is unveiled. The Deacon was a useful

Mr. William Carnie.

(*Photo. by Wilson, Aberdeen.*)

and skilful vocalist. In a complicated passage, those who sat next to him found him in the highest degree useful. But when the crucial test of the evening's performance at one of Davie's concerts came —Weber's "Laughing Chorus"—then the Deacon's geniality and humour overpowered all rule and authority. Entering into the spirit of the chorus con amore, he simply revelled in it—so outrageously, too, that the staid, musical "Ha, ha's," tied to run in harness, so to speak, "jumped the traces" and broke entirely away from the control of the conductor. In this "awkward dilemma," the chorus were not slow to "follow the lead," and, the audience by this time also joining in, the music ended in a riotous torrent of laughter.

MR JAMES DAVIE.

Mr James Davie—although not a precentor in strict sense—was a teacher of vocal and instrumental music in Aberdeen of considerable eminence. In 1802 he published a collection of "sacred" music which contains nothing much to warrant its issue, other than the transparent antiquity of the tunes. In or about 1835 Mr Davie was organist of St Andrew's Chapel, and to this musician must be given the credit of inaugurating a choral union—in a modest way. The members met, at the outset, in a room in Flourmill Lane, and

later in a hall in Crown Court. The meetings are said to have been most enjoyable. Mr Davie taught vocal music successfully, and not a few precentors in his day came under his instruction. But the flute playing of "Jamie" Davie was his outstanding characteristic. In this connection a good story is told of his energy, confidence, and pertinacity. In the early days of his professional career a young fellow came to Mr Davie to get tuition on the flute. "Jamie" —so the story goes—knew nothing about the flute, and certainly had never played the instrument. Instead of pleading ignorance, however, he coolly proposed a fairly substantial fee, and put off the pupil's first lesson for a week. He procured a flute and a lesson book, and set himself the task of keeping ahead of his pupil, which he successfully accomplished. At the end of about a couple of quarters both were fairly respectable players. In after years — let it be duly noted—no orchestral performance in Aberdeen was complete without Jamie Davie at the flute.

MR EDWARD PEELE.

In March, 1832, the kirk-session of the West Parish Church selected another English Cathedral singer—a stripling of a lad, about nineteen years of age—to be their precentor. Young as he was, however, Edward Peele had made a name for himself, and so came to Aberdeen with a reputation. On his "trial" day, he gave

an altogether unprecedented display. His voice, a pure alto, could soar to heights invisible! The quality, too, was incomparable. Mr Peele elected to sing a triple time tune set in E flat. But at the last moment he transposed it to B flat—a fifth higher, with the result that the congregation were completely silenced. They simply sat in dumb astonishment, while the smooth melody, with its varied syncopations, was being gradually unfolded to them. Mr Peele was of a most prepossessing appearance, and at once became a great favourite with the ladies. The young Englishman did not, however, see his way to sojourn long in Aberdeen, his period of servitude lasting only some eight months —from 23rd March to 10th November, 1832. It is amusing to read in extracts from Durham newspapers of the time that "when his voice is matured by manhood," Mr Peele was "destined to take a high position in the musical profession." Mr Peele taught the boys in Gordon's Hospital how to sing, and it should be noted that he founded the boys' band of that institution. He paid frequent visits to Aberdeen in later years, and took a lively interest in the band, occasionally making presents to the lads.

MR ALEXANDER COLSTON.

Following directly in the wake of Mr Peele came to the West Kirk Mr Alex-

ander Colston. A building mason to trade, Colston was of powerful physique, but withal more genial and jovial than pugnacious or cantankerous. He was a pupil of John Wilson, the famous Scottish tenor, and had himself a fine ringing voice with which he could declaim with much power. Previous to coming to Aberdeen, Mr Colston had officiated as precentor at churches in Leith and Portobello. He was not a great success as a theorist or teacher, notwithstanding that he held several good appointments in local institutions. Among these were Gordon's Hospital, the Boys' Hospital, Mrs Elmslie's Institution, Dr Bell's School, etc. "Old Cole," as the boys named him, was frequently sorely put to it by the youngsters. In his time corporal punishment was somewhat indiscriminately the order of the day, and doubtless many of Mr Colston's pupils will remember —gratefully, or otherwise—the resounding "scuds" with which he was wont to punctuate his music lessons!

Choirs in Colston's day were becoming more in evidence than they had hitherto been. In the West, payment to members had prevailed for some time, and the choir in his time was in a fairly efficient state. The story goes that among the ladies was a certain "bonnie lass" on whom the precentor had more than once cast loving eyes. On the male side of the choir, however, was "a young rogue" who was also

smitten by the lassie's charms. Perhaps, on account of his youth, he essayed to capture the bashful maiden by means of poetry! At anyrate, he composed some dozen verses of a ballad, two of which are subjoined:—

Aye in the kirk I think of her,
When weel the choir doth chord;
For a' that's sweet in harmonie
Combines in Ellen Ord.

And if the line within the Psalm
By chance should end wi' "Lord,"
I grip the "L" atween my teeth,
And only murmur "Ord."

Of course, to make a satisfactory ending to the story, "Ellen" should have married either Colston or the "poet," but—she did neither. The poet, it may be explained, was destined to follow Mr Colston as precentor in the West Kirk. But the latter's connection as leader of psalmody in the West is another story. Meantime it is sufficient to mention that the "young rogue's" name is William Carnie.

AMATEUR EFFORT.

The world has ever had its full compliment of wiseacres, and Aberdeen, doubtless, has never been without its own select contingent. These good people never seem to weary of reiterating that "Music has made no advance since the dark ages!" To what purpose, however? The fact

cannot be denied, certainly—indeed, it must be perfectly obvious that psalmody all over Scotland was at a very low ebb previous to the revival of 1754; but, at the same time, it should not be forgotten that general education was also pretty much a dead letter. With the decline of the "Sang Schule" and its ultimate demise—locally, in 1758—a period of largely amateur effort—more especially, perhaps, in the country districts—set in; and the musical service in public worship, gradually but surely, lost its previous high character, and "thereby suffered grievously." The days of the Musick Maister and the trained choirs or "bands" began to be numbered, and many—alas! too many—of the precentors who "came after" and "held forth" for a century or more were not of the "onward and upward" type of "progressives." Advancement in the lateran was not sought after; "use and wont," indeed, held sway—but with what disastrous results! Bad habits and style, grotesque actions, and facial grimaces were formed and practised by a great majority of these well-meaning but ignorant men; and it is, therefore, little matter for wonder that Church Music declined, and was all but entirely sacrificed.

GEORGE HALKET.

That some of the precentors located in country towns and villages were far from

ignorant has been clearly enough demonstrated more than once. It would almost appear, however, as if some kind of incompatibility between "sacred" and "profane" minstrelsy had been deemed to exist in those days. In this relation one is reminded of the case of George Halket, the reputed author of "Logie o' Buchan," and one or two fierce Jacobite diatribes.

In the earlier part of the eighteenth century, Halket was schoolmaster, session clerk, and precentor at Rathen. In some mysterious and unaccountable manner, this notable man seems to have gone astray, for we learn that he was dismissed for "faults and gross miscarriages." It may have been that he was a thirsty soul —who knows? The customs of the period gave opportunity to over-indulgence in the quenching process. Poor fellow! his was a hard life. He had to live and sleep as well as teach in the little Rathen school —a dry and dusty place enough for one who had to "take up the line" on Sundays. But, whatever may have been the "gross miscarriages," is it not quite possible they may have had some connection with his "profane" minstrelsy, when, in the company of cronies such as Jamie "wha played on the pipe and the viol sae sma'," he doubtless made the rafters of the little schoolhouse "dirl" on a Saturday night with "strouds" which his more sanctimonious brethren would have

solemnly pronounced "profane and ungodly sangs"? It is gratifying to be able to say with certainty that George Halket's after career shows nothing essentially wrong with the man.

THE MINISTER'S ATTITUDE.

The question has more than once been asked—What led to the introduction of the spurious tunes that were so common in the old days? Perhaps an answer may be found in the most discouraging attitude assumed by a large proportion of the clergy. Interest in the psalmody, on the part of the minister, was reduced to an infinitesimal quantity. The work of the old precentor did not in the slightest degree have any charm for him. This indifference, generally speaking, prevailed over the length and breadth of the land, although—be it said to their honour—there were notable exceptions to the all but universal apathy displayed by the majority of the ministers. On this important aspect of the state of matters in the old days, it may be as well to quote from some of the clergy themselves. Says one—

> The clergyman, in the performance of his sacred functions, is an object of general observation. If his manner be marked by anything bordering on carelessness, he may rest satisfied that his congregation will not be far behind him in irreverence. If his character be worldly and trifling, many may be able to separate the negligence of the preacher from the dignity of

his office. But if he be a man of warm, judicious piety, of a uniform solemnity of demeanour, and yet evince a marked indifference to one portion of the service in which he is not prominently engaged, how will they reason? That the part alluded to is of slight importance, and the neglect of it free from responsibility. May not the clergyman then, in some instances, congratulate himself as the cause of the decline of psalmody.

Another interested minister thus expresses himself—

The instructional and devotional ordinance of psalmody is destined to be more deeply considered and more duly appreciated. It will not fail to receive more attention from ministers and churches when its religious value shall have become more apparent. Now, through long neglect, so cast down and prostrate is its condition that, by many ministers and other good men it is looked upon as a mere affair of singing—a sort of musical entertainment, provided as a relief to the minister and a refreshment to the people—a kind of necessary evil, tolerated by custom, and relished by the least thinking portion of the congregation, and utterly beneath the dignity of ministerial precedency—in fact, a questionable thing, with which the less ministers have to do the better, in which prudence suggests that they should not at all concern themselves beyond the mere act of selecting the psalms and handing them over to the leader.

A HELPING MINISTER.

Rev. J. Marshall Lang—now Principal of Aberdeen University—began his minis-

try in the East Church of Aberdeen in 1856. While actively engaged in the Barony Church, Glasgow, Dr Lang was good enough to make some explanatory remarks with reference to his interest in the service of praise, which have been thus summarised:—

He regards music in the church as a sacred ministry—scarcely less sacred in its own place than the ministry of prayer or the ministry of the Word. He has, therefore, sought its development and improvement, not as a mere outward adornment of divine service, nor as a mere gratification of æsthetic taste, but as in itself distinctly an act of worship, in which the choir leads the praises of the congregation as truly as the clergyman leads its devotion. This feeling he tries to nourish in his own choir in the Barony. At the beginning of the choir practice for the winter season, he holds a special service with the members, and every Sunday morning before they enter church he meets them in the choir-room to ask a blessing on their ministry.

And the same feeling he seeks to kindle in his congregation. The end of praise is not primarily the pleasure of man, but the glory of God; yet that end is the more truly realised, the more beautiful the service of song is made. Dr Lang has no sympathy with the prejudice against "paid singers"—a prejudice which he is right in saying prevents many choirs from ever realising steady progress, and having the parts satisfactorily balanced and rendered. He deplores the low standard as to idea and execution, which prevails among ordinary church members. "They like a choir to face the congregation and bawl into it," he says. They

will not take the trouble to acquire some proficiency in the rendering of the service music, and of any higher style of music than that to which they have been accustomed they are impatient. Dr Lang has fought steadily, and continues to fight against this low conception of the art in the church service. Himself a man with "music in his heart," whose work and life are in tune with the eternal harmonies, his highest aim has ever been to put something of the same music into the hearts and lives of other men.

Had the old precentor received more of this sympathy and encouragement at the hands of the minister, who can doubt that the long-looked-for improvement would have come much sooner than it did?

ANOTHER SIDELIGHT.

The minister's position was, as a rule, homologated by the office-bearers of the church, who further pleaded that really it was their earnest desire to have the church well sung—for they were very fond of music, but there was the precentor to be taken into account. He was such a difficult man to deal with, and had such faith in his own powers that they didn't care to meddle with him—and so they were content to let him go on in his old-fashioned way. There must have been some ground for the statement, doubtless, but the man who could do his work would not be ready to feel offended at candid criticism, or refuse to profit by kindly advice. This, then,

was the position of affairs as between the minister, precentor, and kirk-session. And all through it, psalms were selected at random, were fitted to tunes totally unsuited to the sentiment and feeling of the words, and sung outrageously.

CATHEDRAL SINGERS.

Not once, but many times, have "the foibles and fancies" of the Scottish Precentor been discussed and laughed at, but it is just possible that among the singing fraternity the Celt could hold his own with the Lowland Saxon, and, popularly speaking, "come out top." Here is an account of English Church singers' doings which appears in an old book titled "Microsomography," of date about 1620. The language is, of course, modernised:—

The Common Singing Men in cathedral churches are a bad society, and yet a company of good fellows, that roar deep in the church, but deeper in the tavern. They are the eight parts of speech which go to the syntaxes of service, and are distinguished by their noises much like bells, for they make not a concert but a peal. Their pastime or recreation is prayers, their exercise drinking, yet herein so religiously conducted that they serve God oftest when they are drunk. Their humanity is a leg to the residance, their learning a chapter, for they learn it commonly before they read it; yet the old Hebrew names are little beholden to them, for they miscall them worse than one another. Though they never expound the Scriptures, they handle them much,

and pollute the Gospels with two things—their conversation and their thumbs. Upon working days they behave themselves at prayer as at their pots, for they swallow them down in an instant. Their gowns are laced commonly with streams of ale, the superfluities of a cup or throat above measure. Their skill in melody makes them the better companions abroad, and their anthems abler to sing catches. Long lived for the most part they are not, especially the bass, they overflow their bank so oft to drown the organs. Briefly, if they escape arrest they die suddenly in God's service; and to take their death with more patience, they have wine and cakes at their funeral, and now they keep the church a great deal better, and help to fill it with their bones as before with their noise.

MEANS AND BASES.

Shakespeare, whose extensive knowledge is a conspicuous feature of his works, makes one of his characters in "The Winter's Tale" (Act IV., Scene 3) say—"She hath made me four-and-twenty nose-gays for the shearers, three—man-song—men all, and very good ones; but they are most of them means and bases; but one Puritan amongst them, and he sings Psalms to hornpipes." It is evident the "bases" referred to is the ground base or drone (in music), while the "mean" is the middle part. If, as has been asserted, Shakespeare visited Scotland and sojourned for some time in Aberdeen, is it not possible he may here allude to the music of the Scottish churches of his time?

BERKELEY BAPTIST DIVINITY SCHOOL
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One thing is, however, clearly demonstrated. His Satanic Majesty did not have the copyright of all the best tunes, for here we see that some of the Psalms were sung to hornpipe airs! If further proof be asked, the hymn tune, Helmsley —already mentioned—is strongly reminiscent of the music of Miss Catley's Hornpipe, first published in 1780. The obverse side shows a different picture, however. Not so long ago a case was tried in the Court of King's Bench where two vocalists claimed the paternity of a music-hall ditty —"O Charlie, come to me." It came out in evidence that the melody was a paraphrase of a hymn tune slightly altered!

AMONG THE ABERDEEN CHURCHES.

We may now hie back to earlier precentors. Aberdeen, in the matter of its churches, is nothing if not historical, for is it not on record that, somewhere about the year 567, St Columba brought the gospel to the tribes then inhabiting Scotland north of the Grampians, and forthwith began to build churches? And it is not altogether beyond the pale of probability that among the number was the "original" Church of St Nicholas, on the site of which now stand the West and East Churches! An account of the building of these churches would be fruitful of much that is interesting, but a very few words must here suffice.

The West Parish Church is built on what was the nave or westmost portion of an Old Church of St Nicholas that "began to be builded"—this, on the authority of an old writer—"by the citizens about the year 1060." In 1732 or 1733, the old church had become unsafe in consequence of its great age, and ceased to be used as a place of worship. It lay in a totally neglected state for well nigh twenty years — till 1751, in fact, when contracts were entered into for taking down the insecure nave and erecting the present edifice. The designs for both the East and West Kirks, it should be noted, were furnished respectively by Archibald Simpson and James Gibbs, our townsmen, and at the end of four years the West Church was opened with considerable ceremony on "Sunday, the 9th day of November, 1755"—Thomas Shannon and a "hired band" leading the praise. It is worthy of mention that the freestone of which the church is almost entirely built was brought from Queensferry—a considerable distance then—at a substantial addition to the cost of the mason work. This action on the part of the authorities can only be accounted for by the fact that the working of the native granite was not so well understood as to warrant the builders attempting to put together such an edifice with the local material. It goes without saying, however, that the substitution of sandstone for granite is a blemish in an otherwise fine ecclesiastical structure.

The walls, by the action of the weather, betray a black and battered appearance, but the base courses, built of Aberdeen granite, are as perfect as on the day they were laid down.

The first East Church occupied the east end of the site whereon stood the old Church of St Nicholas. In 1352—five years before the first stone of the Cathedral of St Machar was laid—the two bells, "Maria" and "Lawrence" ("Old Lowry"), were hung in St Nicholas Tower. The old steeple and belfry, with its peal of eight bells (including the two named), was completely destroyed by the great fire of 1874. The original East Church, which cost over £6000, was taken down in 1837 and the present building erected.

THE MUSIC OF THE SANCTUARY.

If thus the history of the "stone and lime" is fraught with cherished associations, how much more so is that of the growth and development of the music within the walls of these sanctuaries! In this important connection, some details of the rise and progress of psalmody in the West and East Churches — principally as embodied in the appointments of the several precentors—may prove acceptable.

In "A History of the Guthrie Family" (printed for private circulation) the following interesting excerpt, condensed, is taken:—James Chalmers, senior, born

Mr. James Chalmers, Sen.

1713; died 1764; studied for the ministry of the Church of England. Said to have attended Oxford University. He was well skilled in the learned languages, and of many accomplishments, including music. The Dictionary of National Biography refers to him as "a learned printer," and in the Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen he is spoken of as "a printer of high classical attainments." He was a fellow-apprentice in Watts' printing office, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, of Benjamin Franklin. Chalmers returned to Aberdeen in 1736. Thereafter he was appointed printer to the University and the Town Council of Aberdeen. The latter appointment carried with it the use of the printing office occupied by a succession of town's printers from the days of Raban. His salary from the University was £20 Scots, collected from the students. In return he undertook to print their public theses at the rate of ten merks Scots for each sheet, the University being bound to provide the necessary paper. In 1740 Mr James Chalmers was appointed precentor of the Old or West Kirk and Master of the Music School. He was the eldest surviving son of Professor James Chalmer, a graduate of Aberdeen University, and minister of Greyfriars Church in 1728. On his return from London, this early printer changed the family name from Chalmer to Chalmers. During his tenancy of the

"dask," Mr Chalmers published a collection of Church tunes — which, after the manner of the day, he dedicated to the Provost, Baillies, and Town Council. This publication appeared about 1748-9.

On 21st November, 1774, then, Mr James Chalmers, jun., printer, after "having sung before the congregation" on the 9th of the same month, was duly elected precentor by the Town Council, in succession to a Mr James Pringle, resigned. About Mr Pringle there seems to be no specific information; but Mr Chalmers was the son of Mr James Chalmers, the founder, proprietor, and printer of the "Aberdeen Journal." The elder Chalmers was for some time in the trade with James Nicol—already referred to in a former article—who succeeded his father-in-law, John Forbes of the "Cantus" fame, in 1710. Tuesday, January 5th, 1748, saw the first copy of the "Journal" printed in the same house in Huxter Row (behind the site of the North of Scotland Bank) where Edward Raban—"the Laird of Letters" and "Toune's Printer"—published his early and quaint books. The lower part of the building was a meat market, the upper floor a dwelling-house for the printer, while the attic floor was the printing office. The printing and publishing office of the "Journal" was later removed to the upper floor of a building (originally a silk ribbon mill) in the rear of the old Town House which was reached

by a long and very steep outer stair. Here it was that, in 1787, Robert Burns met the son of "Tullochgorum," to which event the Longside poet refers in the lines—

O happy hour for evermair
That led my chil' (child) up Cha'mers' stair.

Mr Chalmers, the precentor of the West Kirk, is the "Cha'mers" here mentioned. He continued in office at the Kirk for twenty-three years at a yearly salary of £200 Scots. It would appear that Mr Chalmers, in addition to his musical ability, must have been humoursome as well, for we find Burns referring to him as "a facetious fellow." Burns also, with reference to this meeting, says—"There was an adjournment for a dram; though our time was short we had fifty auld sangs through our hand, and spent an hour or two most agreeably." Chalmers was high in the good graces of the select little Musical Society of his day.

In 1792, we find John Aitken, a teacher of vocal music, advertising in the columns of the "Journal" that he is now to reside in Aberdeen, and is to open a class on Sunday evenings gratis to "persons who bring with them recommendations from their ministers." Whether, in point of attendance, the class was successful or not, there are no means of knowing. The notion is, however, novel.

MR WILLIAM MAXWELL SHAW.

"After competitive trial," on 13th December, 1797, Mr William Maxwell Shaw, who came to Aberdeen from Dingwall, was elected to the office of "precentor of the West Church, and teacher of vocal music in the city," at a salary of £20 for precentor and £5 as teacher of vocal music." It is somewhat doubtful whether Mr Shaw was a native—some authorities maintain he was, while others seem equally determined that he was not—but he at least was of Scottish extraction. For about eight years, Mr Shaw "took up the line" in the West Kirk, and then left for America, where, at Boston, in July, 1805—the year in which he resigned office—he died. He is spoken of as "one of the first vocalists of his time, as well as an excellent instrumentalist." His singing of the Psalms was so much admired that "the congregation accompanied him very softly that they might be able to hear his beautifully round and manly voice, which appeared to fill the church without any exertion or disagreeable loudness." Mr Shaw edited a collection of Church Tunes—thirty-one in number—of which six were composed by himself. Everything points to this precentor having been a really cultured musician and considerably ahead of his time. Mr Shaw was a pupil of Urbani.

Following Mr Shaw came Mr William

Milne, in business as a painter and glazier for many years in Aberdeen. Mr Milne has left little record of his six years' stewardship other than that he was a man of most retiring disposition, and the possessor of a very fair, sweet, and tuneful tenor voice.

MR JOHN KNOTT.

About this period a change seems to have come over the spirit and ambition of the city fathers, for next on the list of eminent men and qualified musicians who have occupied the "lateran" of the West Church came Mr John Knott, a jolly Englishman, who served from 23rd May, 1811, till about the end of 1823. Mr Knott is said to have been a baker to trade, and came from Newcastle to Aberdeen. He was "a respectable and very gentlemanly, stoutish man, of nearly middle height, with a fine fresh complexion, beautifully-curling fair hair, and an easy roll in his gait—in fact, a gentleman all over." Mr Knott might have been "anything" between thirty and forty when he entered on his duties at the West Church. He had a powerful mellow tenor voice, and an animated, somewhat declamatory manner of singing. He introduced a number of new tunes to the people of the West, but "all of the best classical style." Incidentally, the tune which got him the appointment at the "competitive test" was St Stephen's, or Newington—a

tune composed by Rev. William Jones, M.A., rector of Hollingbourne, Kent, and perpetual curate of Nayland, Suffolk, from 1776 till 1800. It was first set to Psalm xxiii. St Stephen's appears in a collection of psalm tunes published by John Knott in 1814. It is now, however, known exclusively as Newington.

St Stephen's was new to Aberdeen, and one can almost conjure up the astonishing result Knott must have produced in the minds of the congregation when he sang this fine tune "with triumphant effect." Mr Knott was an immense favourite both as precentor and teacher, and it is worthy of notice that he was the first to break down the all-prevailing fashion of introducing "graces" so common previously—more especially in Mr Shaw's time. He taught a class of some 200 in one of the galleries of the West Church; and, in addition to his church salary and teaching fee (£30), his emoluments were further added to by the free proceeds of an annual concert held under the direct patronage of the Town Council.

For some time Mr Knott had no choir, but Mrs Knott, on occasion, sat beside her husband and helped him materially in leading the praise. The good lady, it is said, "had a remarkably fine, powerful voice." Not very long after Mr Knott secured a few picked voices from among the boys of Gordon's Hospital, and the singing of the lads was characterised by "excellence and

purity of tone." He was also music master at Gordon's Hospital, but does not seem to have been a favourite with the boys. In 1824, Mr Knott left Aberdeen for Edinburgh, where he was precentor for some years in the then New North Church. He died in the capital in 1837. His period of service in Aberdeen extended to about twelve years.

PSALMODY IMPROVEMENT IN 1854.

To make the narrative piece together more coherently, it may be as well to break aside for a short space from the purely biographical section of the subject under notice, and to now give a short epitome of the movement inaugurated in Aberdeen in 1854. The year named heralded in the dawn of a new era in Scottish Psalmody. A little wave—likened to the "cloud no bigger than a man's hand"—began to raise its crested head, and by persistent regularity of action, and with gathering force, swept over the quicksands of prejudice that prevailed in the minds of the people regarding the Service of Praise. The innovation happily presaged a real and lasting improvement in Church music. To the present generation it might seem superfluous to found an association for the improvement of Psalmody. In 1854 it was different. Yet the story of the inception of this very useful body should be full of interest even to-day. More especi-

ally should the tale concern the general reader when it is pointed out that one of its two originators and its first conductor are both alive—hale and hearty, and taking a lively interest in all that pertains to the good of their native city.

ENTHUSIASTS.

About the beginning of the 'fifties of last century, two young, enthusiastic musicians—both singing men—were in the habit of frequently meeting and discussing, with all the profundity of their youthful wisdom, various means of reform in regard to psalmody and better congregational singing. After long and serious consideration, they came to the conclusion that nothing short of "a musical volcanic eruption" would meet the exigencies of the case.

The attention of the people must be aroused to their shortcomings, and an "association," it was considered, would be the best means of attaining the object in view. So these two "conspirators"—one was a bookseller; the other a pressman on the staff of the "Aberdeen Journal"—not without some inward quakings, floated their scheme, which, without doubt, paved the way for greater accomplishments later.

The first president of the new body was Lord Haddo; the vice-presidents — the Lord Provost, Mr George Thompson, jun. of Pitmedden, and Sheriff Watson. The

chairman was Mr Neil Smith, jun., and there was a large and influential honorary committee, an extensive list of honorary members, and an excellent acting committee. The bookseller referred to—Mr George Walker, then of Messrs A. Brown and Co.—was appointed secretary, and the pressman—Mr James Valentine—was made a member of committee, but latterly was associated with Mr Walker as joint secretary. Mr James Walker, of Messrs W. Walker and Sons, Union Street, was treasurer; and Mr William Carnie—who was then, as he continued to be for many years after, indispensable in musical circles—was appointed conductor.

THE PRACTICAL OUTCOME.

A choir was formed consisting of 160 voices at the first public performances, but ultimately augmented to 200, and the first appearance was made a month or two after the inauguration of the association in September of the year mentioned. During the season 1855-6 three concerts were given—30th November, 1855; and 28th January and 9th April following. At first the public appearances were made in the East Parish Church, but after a time the building was found to be unsuitable, and the meetings were removed elsewhere. Early in the career of the association elementary instruction classes were formed. But these were the direct outcome of a

conference between a sub-committee of the parent body and representatives of the Free Church Psalmody Association, formed in September, 1855.

The first class then was taken up under the superintendence and direction of Mr William Davidson, precentor of Trinity Free Church—a flesher to trade. "The committee," we find, "had great reason to be satisfied with the progress made by the class," during a short session of eleven meetings. "The Elementary Text-Book," a publication compiled and edited by Messrs Walker and Valentine, was used at Mr Davidson's class. Looking back dispassionately at these far-away efforts to improve musical knowledge, it is much to be feared that the labour did not by any means compensate for the time spent upon it. The difficulty of reading from the staff notation was not any easier then than it is now—if, indeed, it had not been more difficult.

Three or four years after, however, a new notation was introduced that has completely revolutionised the reading of vocal music. Needless to say, the tonic sol-fa is meant.

PRACTICE IN PSALMODY.

In connection with the general class for practice in Psalmody, Mr Carnie was, of course, solely responsible, and so satisfactorily did he carry out his duties that the

committee put on record in their minutes their high appreciation of his important services in that capacity, but particularly as conductor of the choir of 160 voices. Efforts were also made to have musical instruction introduced into various of the schools, though the venture was but moderately successful.

The Town Council were memorialised on the subject of "the revival of the ancient Music School of the city, chiefly with a view to train prospective teachers of the young and leaders of Psalmody." Although the matter was favourably entertained, nothing seems to have come of the proposal. The Education Committee of the council voted ten guineas; the president of the association "donated" £5, and Baillies Henderson and Watson each £1 to further the object.

The resuscitation of the ancient Music School was to be accomplished, we are told, by means of a series of lectures and lessons combined. The subjects of the lectures should be such as — Acoustics, physiology of the voice and ear, history of music, etc.; and of the lessons—Vocalisation, art of leading, science of harmony, etc. A comprehensive, not to say exhaustive programme, truly, but somewhat Utopian! It was not, however, for lack of zeal on the part of the promoters of the association that "the glorious reformation" did not, mushroom-like, spring up in a night.

To the credit of the committee, they realised that the country districts must be nursed and carefully watched and guided.

We therefore find that some good work was being accomplished at Foveran, Aboyne, Huntly, Peterculter, Oldmeldrum, and Udny, which were lectured on the subject of mending their musical ways; and that classes were conducted at Peterculter, Banchory, Birse, Strachan, and Drumoak. These were all the result of the association's initiative. But Mr J. S. Reid, a gentleman who devoted himself exclusively to the work of teaching and leading Psalmody, was leaving the impress of his work in Foveran, Lumphanan, Aboyne, and Birse.

GENERAL PROGRESS OF THE MOVEMENT.

Not only was the neighbourhood of Aberdeen being thus permeated by a spirit of musical chivalry, but even in the Scottish capital the good accruing from a systematic teaching of the rudiments was being felt. Indeed, all over the British Isles at this time sincere effort was being made in the direction of advancement and improvement. The Psalmody Association's report for 1856 says—"Your committee have to record with satisfaction that a vocal impulse has been given to the movement for musical, and especially for Psalmodic improvement. A majority of

the religious bodies both in Scotland and England, as well as of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, have taken up the subject of Psalmody in their superior courts, and are either encouraging or actually carrying out practical measures."

The ramifications of the association's work in Aberdeen may be summed up as follows : — One general, three denominational, and 26 congregational practice meetings; eight societies for the practice of vocal music, six schools in which music was taught, five schools where singing was practised by ear, and at least five or six special classes for teaching music. In the district around Aberdeen there were 15 general and four congregational associations; in 14 schools music was taught; and 44 classes for teaching music were being carried on.

One is apt to think that the General Association for the Improvement of Psalmody must have kept its weather-eye distinctly open. Be that as it may, we find that in 1855 there was a revenue of upwards of £200, and the association was actually making money. Out of this revenue the fund to revive the ancient Music School of the city was augmented to £25. £50 was also set aside to be applied to the scheme of "procuring a Music Hall in this city, with accommodation on a scale to meet the increasing requirements of the times." £100 was

placed in the hands of "the chairman of your committee for the same purpose" by a friend much interested. Both sums were duly "deposited in the bank" to await developments. These latter came all in good time, for on 19th October, 1859 — three years later — the Union Street Music Hall was opened with great ceremony by H.R.H. the late Prince Consort.

All this, of course, proves that, with a slow advancement in the knowledge of the science and art of music, general education was also moving in an onward and upward direction. It must not, however, for a moment be imagined that the Aberdeen Psalmody Association and kindred societies throughout Scotland did all, or nearly all, the work of improvement in church music, and its audible interpretation.

At this period there lived several men whose influence on Psalmody and the precentors of the time may not be lightly passed over. Some of them were not actually precentors, but, all the same, their efforts in "the cause" were far-reaching and of very considerable value.

MR WILLIAM SMITH, JUN.

The first of these, in chronological order, was Mr William Smith, jun.—a notable figure in his day. William Smith was a

son of the manse. His father, Dr Alexander Smith, was minister of the Parish Church of Chapel of Garioch; and the son was educated at the Grammar School, Aberdeen. Originally intended for the ministry, it is said, William Smith drifted into business as a merchant-grocer, and carried on that trade for a number of years in the shop in Union Street now occupied by Mr John M. Spalding, at the corner of the bridge spanning Correction Wynd. In those far-away days, Mr Smith was familiarly—although not in any sense disparagingly—spoken of and known as "Pekoe Willie"—his speciality being tea. But the staid and solemn-visaged William Smith was not cut out for business. He was, in fact, what may be termed "a dreamy visionary." An enthusiastic student of Shakespeare's plays, he dabbled much in them. Indeed, to such controversial heights did Mr Smith ascend that an interleaved copy of the poet's works, found among his books, contains trenchant comments and candid criticism, sufficient to cause the great English poet and dramatist to turn uncomfortably in his grave!

Mr Smith was also an amateur musician of no mean repute; so, in 1844, we find him beginning the publication of a new collection of Psalmody known as "The People's Tune Book." Viewed calmly and dispassionately—after over sixty years' interval—there need be no hesitation in saying that, had the work ever been completed, it would

have stood unrivalled as a compilation of all that was worth collecting and keeping together in Church music. Only five numbers were issued, however. The Free Church Assembly took up the matter of providing a tune book, and thus ousted "The People's Tune Book." Each of the five numbers spoken of contained at least thirty tunes, and the price—fourpence—brought the numbers "within the reach of all." But the book was got up, alas! too expensively for its editor's means. The tunes it contained were beautifully engraved on copper plates by Robert Home, of Edinburgh, a specialist in music engraving of the time.

Incomplete as it stands, the collection is a unique one, and probably is still unexcelled. But the chief object in introducing "the man and his book" was to explain that, in 1854, "The People's Tune Book" was chosen as the practical textbook of the local Association for the Improvement of Psalmody.

Mr Smith never aspired to the position of an adept in the science of harmony, but he composed a number of Psalm tunes—afterwards published—among which were Camillus and Plantagenet—perhaps two of the best—a "short" and "common" metre respectively. The editor of "The People's Tune Book" was a striking personality. Slightly over the average height and, figuratively speaking, "carrying the world

Mr. James Chalmers, Jun.

on his back," Mr Smith was generally dressed in snuff-brown coloured "hame-spun" trousers, a Melton cutaway coat, and a waistcoat "built" of similar material. A thick brown plaid was thrown negligently but artistically round his shoulders and neck, and helped materially to enhance the picturesqueness of the well-proportioned figure. Latterly, when he began to develop asthmatical tendencies, one end of the plaid was held close over the mouth, while with slow and measured paces this rugged figure moved along the streets. What a grand but stately and dignified leonine head did William Smith carry! In different environments, Mr Smith might, perhaps, have been a success. As a business man he was a failure. Had he elected to wag his head "oot owre" a pulpit, the whole tenor of his life would have been changed. But had such been the case, we might never have seen "The People's Tune Book," and our musical literature would have been so much the poorer. Mr Smith died at Newtyle, Dundee, in 1878.

William Smith, by his singular personality, was the centre of a succession of youthful Aberdonians, who afterwards attained eminence — men like Professor Masson, Professor M'Kendrick, and John Phillip, the painter. The following lines in "Raban: or Life Splinters," by Dr Walter C. Smith, are understood to be a tribute from the poet to his namesake,

from whom he received much stimulus in early life:—

With supple form and radiant face,
And shock of swirling auburn hair,
And brown plaid worn with careless grace,
He sauntered, loitering everywhere;
For his swift-glancing eye must look
On all that met him on the way,
And every street was like a book
Which he could read the live-long day;
Nor sun nor moon nor star nor chime
Set punctual tide for him or time,
For all his habits were at strife
With orderly mechanic life.

. . . . . .

The music of the ancient days,
The pictures of the age of faith,
When Song was still the voice of praise,
And Worship had its vital breath
In forms of loveliness divine—
Virgin and babe of tender grace—
He would be drunken as with wine
On holy hymn or saintly face.

. . . . . .

And we, who gathered round him, young
And eager, inspiration caught
From broken fragments which he sung,
Or glimpses of far-reaching thought.
In letters some, and some in Art,
And some in Science took their part;
But all ascribed to him that they
Had found their true life and its way:
Meanwhile he struggled lonely, poor,
Indebted, slighted, and obscure,
And went through darkness into rest:
But yet his thoughts with us abide;
He lives in us, when we are best,
He is but changed and multiplied.

MR WILLIAM ANDERSON.

Another of the group of striking personal notabilities of the time referred to was Mr William Anderson. Originally a wood-turner at Messrs Hadden and Sons' factory, our subject latterly went into the clothiery business, and his shop in Queen Street was for many years the rendezvous of local musical folk. Mr Anderson was a favourite pupil of Mr James Davie, a teacher who seems to have been successful in rearing and educating many good musicians in Aberdeen. But even before his connection with "Jamie" Davie, Mr Anderson seems to have given considerable attention to vocal music. In 1835, he was appointed precentor of the South Parish Church, and under his careful guidance the choir reached a high stage of proficiency. From about 1842 he taught classes with much success in the Mechanics' Institute, Market Street—the system being Wilhelm's "immovable doh." The effect of his work in this direction was vividly brought out in the '54 movement. At the Disruption in 1843, Mr Anderson left "the auld kirk," in company with the majority of the South congregation, and joined the Free Church. In that denomination he remained for 28 years—till 1871.

William Anderson assisted Mr William Smith to a considerable extent, technically, while the latter was busily engaged on the

compilation of "The People's Tune Book." In co-operation with the precentors of the East and West Free Churches, the tunes and harmonies were first introduced by means of joint practisings. In 1858, when the Music Hall was in course of completion, Mr Anderson was chosen to act with others in considering "ways and means" for promoting musical study and public entertainments in connection therewith. Mr Anderson was an original member of the Aberdeen Choral Union; and was elected chairman in 1866, in which office he remained for about 18 months. He was also closely associated with the Aberdeen Free Church Psalmody Association; and was appointed an examiner by the Free Church Assembly for the precentors' certificates granted by that Church. Mr Anderson was the author of a volume entitled "Precentors and Musical Professors," and several tracts bearing on Psalmody. He also acted as musical critic for a number of years to a local newspaper.

MR W. R. BROOMFIELD.

The most illustrious—as he was, perhaps, the most diffident—of the group of Psalmody reformers and improvers now under observation was William Robert Broomfield, an Argyleshire man, who located himself in the Granite City about 1850. He was then a dapper young

fellow, between 26 and 27 years of age, but with a reputation partly made. He had to good purpose studied music at Glasgow under John Turnbull. Broomfield had proved a diligent student, was a man of brilliant scholarly parts, and wielded a facile pen, albeit it was at times somewhat deeply profound. As a writer, indeed, he was half a century in front of his day. A perusal of his little brochure, "The Principles of Ancient and Modern Music," published in 1863, will demonstrate beyond all doubt the truth of the assertion. He must have found comparatively few who could coherently follow his logical reasonings and sequences. But his sympathies did not lie in the direction of leniency towards the dullard. In fact, a distinct note of impatience is traceable in his writings—a note that will not readily appeal to the make-believe. The music he knew and practised was of the strictly mathematical order. The æsthetic side had no charm for him. Yet it is remarkable that the harmonies he wrote and arranged for quite a number of our better-known Scottish songs—published in book form—are more musically grateful to the ear than most of the elaborate present-day settings. The charm of Broomfield's harmonies lie, first of all, probably in their simplicity and "singableness"; and, next, in the extremely melodious character of the "parts." These qualities apply with equal force to his Church tunes.

But it is doubtful if St Kilda, shorn of the sentimentality that has for so many years surrounded it, could bear the search-light of coldly, calculating, critical examination of to-day. Why, therefore, St Kilda and Broomfield should be so persistently bracketed together—to the exclusion of many more successful essays—is difficult to understand. As well—perhaps better—conjoin Broomfield's name with Shandon, Culloden, Bethphage, Zion, and many other sterling tunes of his composition.

When all has been said, however, Broomfield's strength did not lie in composition. Harmony was his stronghold. And this chief talent of his was made to be felt over the length and breadth of Scotland. Not a single collection of tunes published, north or south, but bore the impress of Broomfield's genius and skill in harmony. And his services did not always meet with the recognition they deserved. Many a psalm and hymn tune harmonised by "Broomie" found their way into collections unhonoured, or with some one else's name attached.

BROOMFIELD—THE MAN.

William Broomfield was a singularly inoffensive, mildly-mannered man. He was "a bundle of nerves," as he shuffled—it could not with absolute truth be said he walked — along the streets, communing

audibly with himself. He was said to be eccentric. Probably he was; but the eccentricity lay in the region of intellect, brain, genius—what you will. The mental balance was correct up to a given point. What was lacking was the element popularly spoken of as will-power or self-restraint. In everything else, intellectually, William Broomfield was a giant among his fellows. His humour was more fanciful than swift or keen, but he took life seriously! It afforded him much apparent amusement, for example, when anyone addressed him as Mr Bloomfield. This not infrequently happened, and his retort was happy. "Tut, tut; well, well; but you should remember the 'broom' can never 'bloom' without the 'field'. Broom-field! You see?"

Poor Broomfield! He was much misjudged in life, and the prejudice was not removed after death. The story is oft-repeated. Let a man sink ever so little under what is popularly looked upon as the level of moral rectitude, and he becomes a social pariah. All the same, the fruit of his brain is stolen and made capital of without so much as a "By your leave." Fortunately for William Robert Broomfield, his works, so far as Psalmody and precentors are concerned, do live!

MR DONALD REID.

For a generation the name of Donald Reid partook of the nature of a household

word in the homes of the congregation who worshipped in the East Free (Now United Free) Church, Aberdeen. And his name is yet revered and spoken of lovingly. Donald Reid—for the ornamental prefix "Mr" was rarely used—came to Bon-Accord from Inverness, and was for a short time precentor in the East Parish Church. At the Disruption, however, like many more worthy, time-honoured men, he "came out" along with a large proportion of the congregation, together with the respected minister, Rev. Dr James Foote, and joined the new Free Church. For over forty years "Donald" walked in and out among the congregation of the "Free East," and assiduously led them in their praise every Sunday. He was a sturdy, and, indeed, a remarkable personality. He may truthfully be said to have belonged to that stately school of old-fashioned Scots, whose independence—almost to giving offence, but withal kindly and couthy in manner—was so thoroughly characteristic of the Northern race. Perhaps the Celtic strain of blood that ran through his veins may have had something to do with the occasional reticence that almost amounted to stiffness that he displayed. But why differentiate too narrowly as between the Lowland Scot and the Highland Celt?

THE FIRST FREE CHURCH ASSEMBLY.

It was with a proud and suggestive upraising of the shoulders that Donald was

wont to retail the fact that he led the singing at the first General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, held at Inverness in 1844. It needed no more than the flash and sparkle of the old man's eye, as he recounted his experiences of that historic time, to satisfy the listener that Donald's gratification was entirely beyond any other means of expression. He was truly a typical old-time precentor, who wore the gown with a solemn dignity and pride that became his well-knit frame and pleasant face. And the robe was no castaway garment, for, in gorgeous trimming, it could hold its own with the minister's!

DONALD REID—THE MUSICIAN.

Donald Reid's theoretical knowledge may not have been extensive, and his reading of music "at sight" did not belong to the "first" degree, perhaps, but once he got up a tune, there were few who could declaim its notes with that clearness of perception that betokened an apparent knowledge like Donald Reid. And his taste, too, must have been correct and accurate, for, it is said, that when he introduced a new tune, it amounted to putting a hall-mark upon the composition. If Donald Reid sang it, the tune must be right!

Donald was on specially good terms with his minister, Dr Foote, but he drew a pretty hard and fast line between the occupant of the pulpit and the man who

sat beneath him in the lateran. One was the complement to the other, certainly, but each had his direct vocation, and woe betide the individual—male or female, prophet, priest, or king—who had the temerity to interfere with the precentor. Ever courteous, Donald could also be firm. On occasion he would over or under "pitch" —generally, however, the latter—the tune on a Sunday. But, after proceeding for a short distance, he would suddenly cry out, "Stop! We'll take that over again." In his palmy days, Donald must have had quite a phenomenal voice, in the matter of range. He was wont to say that, "when at his best, his compass all but extended to three octaves!"

A GAS STORY.

One memorable Sunday afternoon—the services then were morning and afternoon —in winter time, something went wrong with the lighting arrangements, and the church was precipitately plunged in darkness. It may have been the beadle's fault in screwing out the gas in place of raising it—the matter is of small moment. Good old Dr Foote had given out a Psalm to be sung, and Donald was busy singing it when the light went out. Leaning over the pulpit, the doctor tried to urge Donald to wait till the gas was re-lit, but in vain. The precentor halted long enough in the middle of a line to half turn round and

say—"Never mind, sir, it's all the same," meaning, doubtless, that he had the words and music by heart. The congregation were accordingly serenaded in the dark!

A COPYRIGHT TUNE.

Donald Reid and Broomfield were early acquaintances in Aberdeen. The old precentor of the Free East used to tell that he bought the "copyright" of St Kilda for half-a-crown from "Broomie," when the latter was "hard up." The story is a likely enough one; and, indeed, it would be interesting to know how many half-crowns the composer made out of St Kilda. It is to be feared Broomfield's much-talked-of tune was a waif that never was copyrighted.

For many years Donald Reid was assisted in his church duties by a voluntary choir, who sat in a "four-square" pew at the foot of the lateran. But, though "he went on Sunday to the church," he never "sat among his boys" or girls! Perched high up in the small, uncomfortable desk that "clung like a limpet" to the pulpit, sat Donald in sombre state. It was in Donald's day that R. A. Smith's St George's, Edinburgh, was first introduced to the Free East congregation on a Communion Sunday night. The worthy custom is handed down to the present time. In Dr Foote, Donald had a kindly helper, who was ever ready with his good counsel.

"No minister," it has been said, "took a warmer interest in the praise than Dr Foote, who, in addition to playing the violin, had an organ in his house in Golden Square."

MR L. G. SANDISON.

Another famous precentor who was first heard of in the Aberdeen musical world shortly anterior to the mid-'fifties was Mr Ludovic Grant Sandison. Mr Sandison was appointed to lead the Psalmody in old Greyfriars Parish Church in 1856, and continued to fill the office till 1884—a period of twenty-eight years. He was an unassuming man; an enthusiast; painstaking as a teacher; and his musical work was characterised by much thoroughness. Mr Sandison carried on business as a fishing-tackle maker, and was spoken of as a skilled and capable workman. But rod-fishing was, like golf, less of a pastime then than either is now, and fortunes were not readily made in making and repairing fishing tackle.

Mr Sandison had always a reliable choir to assist him in his Sunday work. They were composed of working lads and lasses, and their leader gave ungrudgingly of his "spare" time to perfect them in the service of praise.

But Mr Sandison's musical regime marked an epoch in local history and development. He was the pioneer of the Tonic Sol-fa system of musical notation in

Aberdeen and the north, and it will be chiefly, perhaps, in this important connection that his name will be handed on to future generations. In his struggle to gain a footing for the new "letter" notation, what a noble, almost single-handed battle Mr Sandison fought against the most virulent prejudice of the time! Unfortunately, he did not live to see the fruit of his labours, but his successor in the cause of sol-fa in Aberdeen, Mr William Litster, could appreciate and testify to the hard knocks Mr Sandison suffered at the hands of blind, unreasoning staff-notationists. Mr Litster's own experience was not at the outset "a path bestrewn with roses, and flowing with milk and honey!"

THE TONIC SOL-FA STORY.

A scroll of romance is written round the tale of Tonic Sol-fa. About the year 1812 there lived at Norwich the daughter of an English minister, who, with her sister, was active in all kinds of philanthropic work. This elder daughter — the founder of the sol-fa system — was Miss Sarah Ann Glover; her sister, the constant companion and sharer of her labours, was Miss Christina Glover. One day a young Sunday school teacher came to Miss Glover, wishful to learn enough music to be able to use his voice in church. Miss Glover set to work to play a tune to him repeatedly on the pianoforte, he endeavouring to imitate

with his voice the sounds produced by the instrument. It occurred to Miss Glover shortly after she began her instructions that if she pasted letters over the keys of the pianoforte, and then wrote on a piece of paper the letters corresponding with those placed over the keys in the order in which they should be touched to bring out the melody, the young man might teach himself. For this purpose she selected the last twelve letters of the alphabet and fastened them over the black and white keys. But O, P, Q, and the rest looked so barbarous that the question came to be: "Why not place the old sol-fa syllables beneath the pitch notes, and move them up and down, following the keynote of each tune, after the genuine fashion of solmisation?" Do, re, mi, and the rest, were thus soon added, and those who tried to sing a tune in Miss Glover's way did not need to look at O, P, Q—the syllables were sufficient. Except where absolutely necessary, at the beginning of a tune, to tell its pitch, the letters were discarded. All that was therefore left was a Sol-fa Notation of Music.

Experiments were now begun with school children. At first the work was not by any means encouraging. There was considerable opposition to "the new notation of letters," and Miss Glover's efforts were looked upon with suspicion by old notationists. The enthusiastic lady, however, was

not to be daunted, so she went on perfecting her invention.

REV. JOHN CURWEN'S CONNECTION.

Mr Curwen was led to study music in its elementary form, chiefly in order to teach children to sing hymns, and thus interest them and make them love the Sunday school. Unfortunately, he had no natural advantage of ear or voice, and consequently sought for help. He learnt some tunes, and with the assistance of a friend taught them to the children. He also attempted to instil a knowledge of sharps and flats, crotchets and quavers, clefs, etc., but all to no purpose. In his dilemma, Mr Curwen cast about for some method of simplifying the scale construction, according to the gospel of staff notation. Through the kind offices of a Hackney lady, Mr Curwen was put in possession of a copy of a book describing Miss Glover's system. This was no other than the "Manual of the Tetrachordal System"—a work long since out of print. "Well," sair Mr Curwen, after a cursory glance at the book, "if the old notation is puzzling, I am sure this is more puzzling far," and he laid the manual aside. Subsequently, he returned to Miss Glover's book. From a careful perusal he "now saw that Miss Glover's plan was to teach first the simple and beautiful thing Music, and to delay the introduction to the ordinary antiquated mode of writing it

until the pupil had obtained a mastery of the thing itself." To think, with Mr Curwen, was to act, so he gave the system a fair trial, and "in the course of a fortnight, I found myself, mirabile dictu! actually at the height of my previous ambition, being able to 'make out' a psalm tune from the notes and to pitch it myself!"

MISS GLOVER'S TEACHING METHOD.

In the autumn of 1841, we find Mr Curwen on a visit of inspection to Miss Glover's school of instruction at Norwich. The direct result of this visit was that Mr Curwen promptly adopted Miss Glover's method, so well satisfied was he with what he had seen and heard. In time, however, he began to see that the method needed modifications and additions "in order to make it a popular instrument in the hands of those who wished to make everyone sing." In 1848 Mr Curwen wrote and published his "Grammar of Vocal Music," which contained the following : — "The editor is desirous not to deceive the public by allowing them to suppose that these modifications go forth with Miss Glover's full approval; and at the same time he is most anxious that to Miss Glover should be given the fullest credit for that admirable genius, patience, and research which have been shown in the construction of her system, and that to her should be yielded the

chief praise for whatever success his own work may obtain."

Previously—in 1843—when the modifications were first proposed, Miss Glover wrote:—"But though you prefer some alterations, yet you keep to the leading principles of the Sol-fa notation, and my pupils would soon sing from your book and yours from mine." It should be stated that Miss Glover never accepted any pecuniary remuneration for her labours, and, indeed, "repeatedly refused to receive the gifts which the gratitude of her followers offered her."

Into Mr Curwen's subsequent connection with this "simplified music"—the work to which he devoted his life—it is not our purpose to enter here. It is fairly well known, and as a system, the Tonic Sol-fa needs no champion to-day. It unquestionably speaks for itself. As to how much the precentors of a byegone age benefited by the "letter" notation no definite estimate can at present be formed. Its influence has ever been for good, and by means of the Tonic Sol-fa method millions of people have been taught to read music who otherwise would have remained in entire ignorance of the most rudimentary principles of the science.

POINTS OF SIMILARITY AND DIFFERENCE.

As to how far the Tonic Sol-fa method can be said to be the work of either Miss

Glover or Rev. John Curwen, it is somewhat difficult to speak or write absolutely. Miss Glover's books are all out of print, and there is thus no means of correct, independent comparison. Mr Curwen adopted small letters instead of the capitals used by Miss Glover, and changed the O, P, Q (used to denote pitch) for C, B, A, which had at the time an accepted meaning. He also adopted new signs to mark the division of the pulses, and introduced "the empty pulse." He devised the bridge-tone for transitions. These and other alterations are claimed by Mr Curwen, and he it was who gave the name "Tonic Sol-fa" to the notation. In "method" as apart from "notation"—that is the subjects of "Time, Tune, the Art of Teaching, Voice Culture, Harmony, the system of Chord Names, and Composition," etc.—Mr Curwen is entitled to all the credit. The summing-up seems to be that, while Miss Glover undoubtedly discovered and founded sol-fa, Mr Curwen developed and improved the lady's discovery till he made it a workable, dependable system.

MR JOHN ANDERSON.

Aberdeen had no monopoly of worthy occupants of "the dask." Fraserburgh, for example, had some admirable men as precentors. In the early days of the last cen-

tury we hear of one Mackay, who precented in the Parish Church. Little information regarding Mr Mackay is extant, but he would appear to have been a fine singer—at least, he had a voice that filled the kirk.

There was one outstanding figure among the old precentors in Aberdeenshire. He might, indeed, have been appropriately termed "the Star of the East." Born 117 years ago, John Anderson was appointed precentor of the Parish Kirk of Fraserburgh when he was but 19 years of age—surely a young lateranist in all conscience! Mr Anderson discharged the duties for 35 years, which brought his period of service up to Disruption days. He then went out with a considerable number of the congregation and joined the Free Church, where he led the Psalmody for a further period of 20 years — establishing a record for length of service. Nature had endowed Mr Anderson with a fine mellow tenor voice of considerable compass. He could soar up to A or even B flat with perfect ease and correct intonation; and, altogether, he was a precentor in advance of his time.

Fortunately for Fraserburgh, Mr Anderson's musical abilities did not die with him. The gift of music has been largely inherited by his descendants. The late Mr Robert Anderson, solicitor—a son—was not only a good tenor singer, but what is of greater importance, a composer. This young enthusiast early turned his attention to

hymnody, and published an interesting collection of hymn tunes, favourably commented upon. But what Mr Anderson will chiefly be remembered by—outside Fraserburgh, at anyrate—are the two little gems —Opus and Nidus — both to be found in "The Northern Psalter." Both tunes were composed in 1877. Of the two, the last-named is singularly appropriate to the words, which are so tenderly and sympathetically treated.

When the West Parish Church was opened, Mr Anderson undertook to conduct the music, purely as a labour of love. An instrument was introduced, and the first accompanist was his neice—a daughter of Mr J. M. Anderson, J.P.—then a young lady of some seventeen summers. Miss Anderson was followed in the organistship by her brother Edmond, who was a still younger player. Mr Robert Anderson's tenure of office was, alas! cut all too short by his sudden and untimely death at the comparatively early age of 46. It is pleasant to record that, by unanimous opinion, Mr Anderson made the music of the West Church famous.

It is worthy of note that Sir George Anderson, treasurer of the Bank of Scotland, is also a son of the old precentor, Mr John Anderson. Sir George has strong musical tastes and tendencies; and it is quite in keeping with the traditions of the family that the subject of the stained-glass

window he has caused to be put into the Parish Church in memory of his father and mother should appropriately be "Praise."

But the musical talent has been developed to the third generation—the family of Mr J. M. Anderson have all been devoted followers in the divine art. Miss Joan Anderson (now Mrs William Rae, Aberdeen), was one of the best accompanists the old Musical Association in Fraserburgh had. Dr Anderson, Strathmiglo, is known as an amateur organist and composer of sacred music. Then Mr F. J. R. Anderson, town clerk, takes a deep interest in music "in its best form," and has done considerable service in furthering the cause in Fraserburgh. He is at present—and has been for years—president of the Fraserburgh Choral Society. It will thus be seen that the Anderson family, musically, have been and are a power in the land. Perhaps it may not be deemed altogether out of place to quote the inscription on the memorial window erected to the memory of the parents of such a musical family:—

To the glory of God, and in loving memory of John Anderson, born in Fraserburgh, 1789, died there 1868, for thirty-five years precentor in this church; and of Jean Lunan, his wife, born in Fraserburgh 1800, died there 1882. Erected by their grateful son, Sir George Anderson, Knight, treasurer of the Bank of Scotland, 1906.

MR GEORGE GORDON INGRAM.

Mr George Ingram, clothier, went from Huntly to be precentor in the Parish Church, Fraserburgh, at the Disruption. He does not seem to have been a theorist, although he displayed a good, clear, baritone voice, and led fairly well. The singing, however, did not please the minister, Rev. John Cumming, who plumed himself on a knowledge of Psalmody. One Sunday, the storm broke out with great fury, the minister attacking his precentor in no measured terms. The wretchedly "bad singing," as it was characterised by Mr Cumming, was made the peg on which to hang several garlands of strong, if not choice, language. Mr Ingram was a silent listener to the tornado of abuse that issued from the lips of the minister, and when—out of breath, probably—the minister desisted, Mr Ingram quietly remarked—"I'll tell you this, Mr Cumming, the singin' was gweed eneuch for the preachin'!" Mr Ingram retired shortly after. A son of Mr Ingram's was afterwards precentor of the Parish Church, Huntly. He was also a composer and violinist of some note.

MR GEORGE HAY.

Mr Ingram's successor in "the dask" was Mr George Hay. He, too, was a clothier in business, and, in addition, was saturated with music—a musician, indeed,

"to his finger tips." Mr Hay possessed a big, sonorous bass voice, and it is said "his renderings of the bass solos in the oratorios would have compared favourably with the efforts of many of the professionals then looming large in the public eye." Mr Hay had a long term of office as precentor of the Parish Church, remaining at his post for forty years. During that long period this old precentor played a conspicuous part in the musical life of Fraserburgh. "For several decades," we are told, "his shop and house in Cross Street were the rendezvous of all musical devotees." Mr Hay instituted what may be styled chamber concerts in Fraserburgh, and pleasant recollections of the meetings of this select orchestra are recalled by the survivors of those who took part in the laudable musical work. Mr Hay was at the founding of the Musical Association, and became, of course, a prominent member. This is neither the time nor the place to discuss this body, its aspirations and triumphs, but some of the little incidents connected with it are amusing reading.

Mr S——, a painter, had been chosen to sing the well-known solo from Handel's oratorio "The Messiah"—"The Trumpet shall sound." The recitative begins, "Behold, I tell you a mystery," the notes in which Mr S—— had considerable difficulty in catching up. This indefiniteness continued well through the session. One night

he again essayed the music, with the usual disastrous result. Old George Hay, who was playing first violin in the orchestra, turned to the singer and said—"Look here, S——, you started three months ago to tell us a mystery, and we've no heard it yet. You should give it up!" Mr S——, it is said, took the good advice and gave it up.

On another occasion, a worthy member was practising hard at "Arm, Arm, ye brave," in which, it may be remembered, the phrase, "A noble cause," frequently does duty in the words. The singer—a tailor to trade—had a somewhat imperfect pronunciation. On a night, therefore, when he was diligently rehearsing, a wag from the south, who was a listener, remarked loud enough to be heard—"is Mr ——— shouting for a needle-case?"

The orchestra of the association in its early days could boast of a membership of some eight instrumentalists. If tradition speaks truly, some of the players were not finished executants. Some of the fiddlers and one of the two cornets made a great flourish before the baton came down, but it is said that not a single sound came from either instrument during the whole session. The "players" may not have been "musicians of unequalled importance," but they certainly possessed the crowning virtue of patience.

COUNTRY PRECENTORS.

A group of Aberdeenshire men to whom honour should be paid includes—Mr John Johnstone, Whitehills, New Deer; Mr John Lamb, Monquhitter; Mr Robert Jamieson, Greens, Monquhitter; Mr James Cumming, New Deer; Mr William Pickford, Drumoak; and Mr John Cheyne, Auchterless.

Mr Johnstone was precentor in the Free Church, New Deer, and the Parish Church, New Pitsligo. He was a capable musician, and in his best days was conductor of the New Deer Choral Union. When he left the district, Mr Johnstone went to Invergordon.

Mr Lamb was in the Parish Church of Monquhitter, and while in office did good work unostentatiously. He was a man of superior intelligence; a good poet; and had many fine qualities. He was an elder in the church, and greatly interested himself in the poor and the sick of the parish. In private life Mr Lamb was a most genial and attractive personality, and a typical specimen of all the inherent good qualities of the fast dying Scottish elder.

Mr Jamieson was precentor in the Parish Church, New Deer, from 1865-68, and from 1868 till 1882 he filled a similar post in the Parish Church, Millbrex. Mr Jamieson was an enthusiastic Sol-faist, and in this connection it should be mentioned that his

son — the present-day Robert — worthily follows in his father's footsteps. There is no more enthusiastic member of the Aberdeen Musical Institute than Mr Robert Jamieson — the younger. His father accomplished an amount of hard work in musical affairs, frequently under considerable difficulty, but the son was ready on emergency to step in and lend a helping hand—in the "dask" or otherwise. Mr Jamieson—who died some years ago—was the recipient of handsome presents from both congregations in which he so faithfully served.

Mr Cumming led the psalmody in the Parish Church of New Deer from 1868 to the early 'eighties. He was a competent choirmaster, and a man of refined taste. It is but right to say that Mr Cumming brought the choir to a high state of perfection during his term of office. Indeed, it was regarded as one of the best in the district.

The name of Pickford is still a name to charm with on Lower Deeside. Mr William Pickford, sen., began his lateran life in the Free Church of Banchory—following Mr James Thomson, who was long precentor there—and he afterwards was for a number of years leader in Drumoak Free Church. His son is now the choirmaster there. Mr Pickford was in his day an energetic singing master on Deeside, and saw a deal of public musical service.

The most illustrious of this group, how-

ever, is Mr Cheyne of Auchterless. For more than 30 years Mr Cheyne occupied the "dask" at Comrie Parish Kirk, and then he went to New Pitsligo. He was a teacher of music, and during all the years of his active life taught classes in all the surrounding parishes. He was also singing master for many years in the public day schools in Auchterless and Inverkeithny. Mr Cheyne in his day was quite a superior man to the average country precentor. He not only had a thorough working knowledge of the Staff and Sol-fa notations, but was also well versed in the higher branches of musical knowledge. He was a most methodical teacher, and as he could speak fluently on his subject he made his classes most interesting and attractive. Nothing gave him more pleasure, now and then, than for a few of his pupils to ask for lessons in the Staff notation. It kept him from getting rusty himself, he said. Mr Cheyne is a kindly body, and was welcomed wherever he went. "Cheyne of Auchterless" was a household expression in all the surrounding parishes. The choir seat was always well filled, and the singing was hearty and thoroughly congregational. For a considerable period Mr Cheyne played the American organ in the church, but about two years ago a pipe organ was introduced, which caused him to be retired. When that event took place the congregation made him a valuable present.

At the presentation the whole parish was represented, and many interesting speeches were made. For weeks after Mr Cheyne was inundated with letters from pupils in all parts of the country who had got their first lessons from "the singin' maister"—as he was fondly termed. About a year ago, in referring to these and similar events, Mr Cheyne expressed himself as being "as fit yet as he was the day he came to Auchterless, but"—with a merry twinkle in his eye, he added—"the pipe organ played me oot."

MR JOHN HUTCHINSON.

An Aberdeen precentor, who should ere now have been introduced, was Mr John Hutchinson, who succeeded Mr Keard at Trinity Church in 1844. Mr Hutchinson, though a man of delicate, uncertain health, was a gifted vocalist, and was not only an acceptable occupant of the lateran, but also a magnificent exponent of the songs of his native land. In this latter respect, indeed, so refined and artistic were his taste and expression that, had not his health broken down, "he was destined to have excelled and made a name for himself as a singer of Scottish songs." Hutchinson was wont to give frequent concerts in Aberdeen and the districts around. At these, it is said, "he had a fine manly voice, could delineate Scottish character to the life." His rendering of "The Bonnie Hoose o' Airlie"

was one of his best efforts. After about eight years' service as precentor at Trinity, Mr Hutchinson died in 1852. It should be mentioned that, previous to his connection with Trinity, Mr Hutchinson was precentor of the U.P. Church, George Street, and there did some really excellent work. He was ably assisted by several young enthusiasts of the congregation; and these efforts were also encouraged and ably backed up by the minister of the George Street Church.

MR WILLIAM CARNIE.

A SHORT EPITOME.

Mr Carnie's work in psalmody reformation was great, but it has to be pointed out that he was genuinely a lateranist for a very short period during his musical career. His first essay in "the dask" was at Banchory-Devenick, under the ministry of that pawky humorist, Dr Paull. From there he was translated to the West Parish Church, Aberdeen, in 1855, when Mr Colston retired. He was a leader of psalmody —that is, one who, though he may be able to sing well enough himself, can train others to lead the praise in choral form. To-day we have no leaders of psalmody, and the average organist does not appear to quite understand the meaning of either choir or congregational singing.

One is strongly tempted to be exhaustive with such a subject as Mr Carnie, and

he cannot indeed be dismissed with a word. In the days when "select" choirs were undreamt of, Mr Carnie founded a body, known as the "Harmonic," of which Aberdonians were justly proud. The Harmonic Choir consisted of some forty voices —the "pick" of the town—and the services of the members were freely and ungrudgingly enlisted in the cause of charity. It was, however, in connection with the Aberdeen General Psalmody Improvement Association that Mr Carnie did such good work for the Church locally. This body came into existence in 1854, and held its first public meeting in the East Church, with Mr Carnie as conductor. Later on he emerged as the leader of the huge choir, composed of members of all the city choirs, and known far and near as the "Thousand Voices." About this time he turned his attention to the editing of a Psalter that was destined to become more popular than any collection of psalm tunes that had ever preceded it. The "Northern Psalter" was a book that any city might well have been proud of, and although he had never published anything else, this volume alone would ensure Mr Carnie's name being handed down to succeeding generations as a reformer of what in those days sadly needed reformation. It is rarely that the leader of any reform lives to see the fruit of his labours prosper in his own time. His life is generally laboriously occupied, and

he is carried to the grave of his fathers without seeing more than begun what he has consecrated his life to accomplish. In Mr Carnie's case things have been different, and although he may not have accomplished all that he set himself to do, he can at least look back with considerable gratification down the years of his life, and see the rapid advance that has been made in this most essential part of public worship.

NOTATION REFORMERS.

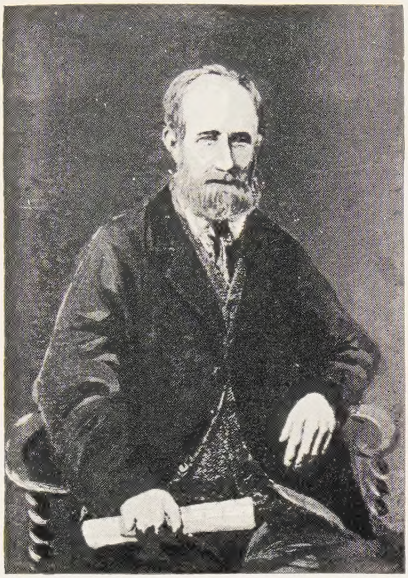
Many attempts were made in the Nineteenth Century to "reconcile" the staff and sol-fa notations, and several of these laudable endeavours deserve mention. About 1846, Henry Steedman, an Edinburgh working bookbinder, attended some of Dr Joseph Mainzer's "singing for the million" classes, but as soon as the natural key of C was left he, in common with many more, felt the great difficulty of "singing against the key," as Tonic Solfaists say. He therefore set himself to find out where doh—in other keys than C—went, as also the various changes of doh with reference to modulations. For some years he worked with might and main in order to solve the knotty problem. Curwen's system was but beginning to be known in Scotland then, but Steedman prosecuted his studies with such success that he ultimately evolved a sol-fa principle of his

own. Several of his acquaintances, when the discovery was made, induced him to give them lessons in his new notation. His first class of ten or twelve enthusiasts met in his mother's back shop. It was soon found, however, that the accommodation was too limited, and so Steedman had perforce to rent a small hall. The class grew in numbers till ultimately his "little" society had a membership of some 200! Part singing formed a portion of the instruction, and from 1850 to 1855 the body was known as "The Thistle Solfeggio Club." Mr Steedman died in 1884.

THE LETTER NOTE METHOD.

In 1863, David Colville—a native of Campbeltown, and a composer of minor merit—in conjunction with George Bentley, the publisher, established "The Letter Note Method" of singing, applying the Sol-fa principle to the Staff Notation by prefixing the initial letter to each note. By this time, however, the Sol-fa was gaining such hold upon the people that the "letter note" method enjoyed but a brief existence.

John Lang, born at Paisley in 1829, was the inventor of a somewhat ingenious notation, known as the "Union," which lived and throve for a number of years. The invention was brought out in 1867 by Mr William Hamilton, a Glasgow publisher, who was the pioneer of cheap music in Scot-



Mr. William R. Broomfield.

land. Indeed, his "British Minstrel" was begun to be issued in numbers at 1d and 1½d each in 1842, two years previous to Alfred Novello's successful attempt to cheapen music in England. Lang's system, briefly put, combined the utility of the principle of the Tonic Sol-fa (movable doh) with the picture presented to the eye by the Staff Notation. In short, the Sol-fa letters were introduced into the notes—black letters in open notes and white letters in black notes. Text books, glees, part songs, anthems, and tune books were regularly printed and used in the "Union" notation. Mr James Henderson, precentor in Gilcomston Free Church, for some time taught classes in Aberdeen in the "Union" method.

ABERDEEN INVENTORS.

Mr James Wilson, precentor at St Clement's Parish Church, and later at the Cathedral, had also a "patent" of the "Union" principle; and Mr George Walker, lately of the firm of Messrs A. Brown and Co., and who was an enthusiastic musical amateur some 50 years ago, also tried his hand at simplifying matters musical in regard to notation.

Then in the beginning of the 'seventies, two brothers came from the south and started business in a small way as coal dealers in Aberdeen. The Brothers Donaldson was the firm's name, and they had a nice "turnout" for delivering cus-

tomers' orders. They sold their "black diamonds" by the bag, or mett, and did a thriving business. The conveyance consisted of a neat, undersized spring lorry drawn by a pair of "cuddies"—"Jeannie" and "Jess." One of the partners—he was musical — rang a bell, and the other "cried" the coals. It was no uncommon thing to find one of the brothers, while the other was "in wi' a bag" at some house, vainly endeavouring to persuade the "twa lassies," i.e., the donkeys, to "come awa'." But, with the perversity of their sex and gentle breeding, "Jeannie" and "Jess" amused themselves by rubbing their noses against each other and smiling roguishly at their master. The whip was never used, but when every other form of coaxing failed, he used to let the reins drop, and moving away thus addressed the chief offender—"Weel, Jeannie, if you'll no gang, I'll gang and leave ye." It was a "moving" appeal, and invariably proved satisfactory.

As has been said, one of the brothers was musical and was the inventor of a complete notation, all his own, known as "Donaldson's Patent." It was a remarkable construction, but was not destined to live.

MINISTERS AS MUSICIANS.

It is most interesting to read of the part occasionally played by certain ministers,

more especially in the North of Scotland, in the advancement of Psalmody and the encouragement of music generally. In the Eighteenth Century, there lived and died at Birse, Aberdeenshire, Rev. Alexander Garden, a noted divine and musician. He it was who composed the celebrated air, "Jenny dang the Weaver," and the anecdote relating to this well-known "spring" is worth repeating. The minister had an orra man, Jock, who was, alas! very much inclined to scamp his work. One day when Mr Garden was in his study trying over a new tune on his beloved Cremona, he heard an altercation between Jock and "the mistress," who had ordered the man to brush the minister's boots. Jock considered this beneath his dignity and refused to do the guidwife's bidding, which so enraged Mrs Garden (who at the moment was busy "chappin' tatties") that she rushed at him with the heavy "chapper" in her hand and thrashed him into obedience. The minister was so delighted with the incident that he gave the air he had just composed the title of "Jenny dang the Weaver." Jock, it should be explained, was originally a weaver.

Mr Garden, it is said, often acted as minister, precentor, beadle, and bellman, although his wife occasionally took duty in the latter capacity.

THE COMPOSER OF "BALFOUR."

Another minister of the Parish Kirk of Birse—Rev. George Knowles—interested

himself vastly in church music. He was the composer of quite a number of tunes of repute in the north. One of these—Balfour, published in 1780—is still in use, and is an excellent specimen of congregational Psalmody. Mr Knowles, it would seem, was more interested in music than he was in theology, and much of his time was employed in perfecting himself in the art of musical composition. He, too, like his predecessor, was a veritable handy man on Sunday; and not only did he lead the singing, but not infrequently would he instruct the aspirant for "dask" honours in the way he should walk.

NEARING THE END.

About 1840, there was an itinerant teacher of music, hailing from Kintore, who, by means of classes in the districts round Aberdeen, did much serviceable work. In early life James Taylor had a shock of paralysis that deprived him of the use of both arms, and, in consequence, he drifted into "teaching" for a livelihood. Mr Taylor edited a remarkably good collection of Psalm tunes which was published by Messrs George Clark and Son, Broad Street, Aberdeen. The book contains "a familiar introduction to the theory and practice of vocal music, with appropriate lessons and examples."

Mr Taylor's instructions for singing read —"Open the mouth freely, and articulate

the words distinctly. Aim at 'expression.' Be careful to pronounce the words properly. In particular, observe the letter 'y.' Do not pronounce like 'i,' in the termination of such words as pity, mercy, mighty, lofty, etc. These should be sounded mightee, loftee, mercee, pitee. Do not introduce flourishes, misnamed 'graces.' Avoid distortions of the face . . . they are extremely disagreeable, and render the singer an object of ridicule. No tune with a repeat in the middle of a line should be sung where the words would be divided by it. The minister should take the trouble of communicating to the precentor previous to the service the Psalms, etc., so that he may have time to select tunes." Mr Taylor concludes with a reference to the state of Psalmody in his time. "It is much to be lamented," he says, "that so delightful a part of the public service should in general be so wretchedly performed."

"Jeems" Taylor, as he was familiarly called, was a tall, handsome-looking man, but was considerably handicapped in his work in consequence of the useless condition of his hands and arms. Did his hat blow off, he must needs wait till someone picked it up and placed it on his head. He seems, however, to have had a marvellous memory, for it is related that he never needed to look at words or music either while he was precenting or teaching.

OTHER INFLUENCES.

Credit has been given to various agencies for being helpful in their way in the advancement and improvement of Psalmody, and promoting the education and culture of the precentor. And while, perhaps, the most potent factor was the inception of the Tonic Sol-fa system of notation, it must not be overlooked there were other influences at work. In 1865 a Precentors' Association was formed in Aberdeen. Then in 1870 was inaugurated the famous choir of "A Thousand Voices," which, in turn, paved the way for the publication of "The Northern Psalter." In 1873 an attempt was made to resuscitate the old Psalmody Improvement Association. The effort met with but indifferent success. The final spurt at collaboration took place over fifteen years ago when a Choir Union was instituted. That it accomplished any good may be very much doubted. The reports of the first meeting showed that the singing of the "massed choirs," numbering about two hundred and fifty voices, was distinguished from that of an average church choir only by the greater volume of sound produced. What was needed, however, was not more sound—choirs, alas! did not then require to be told to "sing out" —but refinement and expression, and these were not to be got by a few scratch rehearsals. Keen disappointment was the

result of reading that such a fine hymn as "Hark! hark! my soul" was "noisy and devoid of expression." A similar remark was made with regard to the hackneyed, village-choir "Te Deum" of Jackson—a "composition" that should have been respectably interred many years ago.

REV. JAMES COOPER, D.D.

On the occasion of the first meeting of this Choir Union, Rev. James Cooper—now Dr Cooper—delivered a historical and practical address on the subject of praise. While it is not practicable to give anything like even a summary of Dr Cooper's remarks, it may be interesting to quote from a leaderette that appeared at the time in a local paper. After a brief resume the article concluded—

Most educated people will probably agree with Mr Cooper that the true way to use the Psalms is to chant them in the prose version. So late as 1839 Tate and Brady seemed as securely in possession of the English Church as the version of Rous is in Scotland now. So little hope of the introduction of prose-chanting was entertained by the author of "The Christian year" that he took the trouble of making a new metrical version of his own. Yet so rapid has been the progress of prose-chanting that the present generation hardly realises that English Churchmen ever did anything else. Mr Cooper says it will be the same in Scotland if we are wise, and when the time comes we shall know the power and beauty of the Psalms as we have never known them before.

There is no doubt whatever of the superiority of the prose to the metrical Psalms, many of which do not satisfy even a moderate poetical taste. There are, however, difficulties in the way of their general introduction. Even choirs can hardly chant a prose Psalm without special preparation, and the practical effect on the people of giving up the present psalter in favour of the prose version would be that of silencing the voice of the congregation. But the thing might be tried on a small scale. In city churches the metrical Psalms are now almost entirely displaced by hymns, so that one prose Psalm introduced now and again into the services would rob the people of very little, while it would probably lead to a freer use of the real words of the Psalmist. It is quite plain, at any rate, that the metrical psalter, except perhaps in the form of an anthology, is doomed.

No record of Psalmody reformers—in the north of Scotland at least—would be complete without reference, however brief, of the invaluable help of several members and relations of a family whose gifts were known far outwith the parishes in which they resided for a number of years.

REV. ANDREW CHRISTIE.

The Rev. Andrew Christie was schoolmaster for some time in the public school at Glentanar, Aberdeenshire. An able and enthusiastic teacher of Sol-fa in that district, he met with a large measure of success, and was most worthily esteemed in that quarter. Among a number of pupils who afterwards distinguished themselves,

musically, should be named Alexander Troup, Ballater, a violinist and musical authority, who spent the greater part of his life in his native parish. Mr Troup was wont to say that he owed very much to Mr Christie's careful and able instructions.

REV. WILLIAM CHRISTIE.

This gentleman was schoolmaster of Marnoch, Banffshire, and did a vast amount of good work in connection with the movement for the revival of psalmody from about 1855-56. He was one of the first in Scotland, and the pioneer north of the Grampians, to introduce and use the then new Tonic Sol-fa method of teaching vocal music. Mr Christie was a man of wide musical sympathies, and at one period of his life spent much time and trouble in organising a concert—the programme of which was entirely composed of ballads taken from Dean Christie's collection. The performers were mostly local, and trained by the enthusiastic dominie. With regard to strathspeys and reels, too, and their history, his knowledge was unique, and at the time few could compete with him as an authority on this special subject.

REV. JOHN CHRISTIE, D.D.

Dr John Christie, who was latterly a Professor in the Aberdeen University, was born at Kildrummy in the 'twenties of last

century. He was a most talented and heart-whole musician, who did much to promote the culture of music in his native village. He gathered together a number of his parishioners and formed a large choir, whom he trained to perform many of the choruses from Handel's oratorio, "The Messiah." And this he did so successfully that he and his choir were the admiration, if not the envy, of their neighbours. Dr Christie followed up this early lead by practising his chorus in a careful and artistic rendering of some fine old English glees, in which task he was materially assisted by his youngest brother Dougall. The doctor and his four brothers took a warm interest in the revival of Psalmody in the north. Their influence in this direction must not be overlooked, for it was by their energy, and others like minded, that congregational singing in country districts became bearable. Dr Christie was ever quick to discover and ready and willing to assist struggling talent. He was a great lover of the beauties and possibilities of Scottish music, and had an intense feeling of appreciation of its simple, modest, and pathetic grace. Two of his daughters—Miss Florence and Miss Lizzie —have devotedly carried their father's musical susceptibilities after him.

Miss Florence Christie is a professional contralto vocalist of eminence throughout Great Britain. She is the founder of the famed Folk-Song Quartet which has made

a name for itself all over the country. Miss Christie studied at the Royal Academy, London, and took first place at the close of her curriculum. She is a highly cultured artiste, and had the honour of singing before the late Queen Victoria at Balmoral.

Miss Lizzie Christie is a teacher of vocal music in Aberdeen, and directress of music at King's College Chapel there. Her pupils' concerts are ever enjoyable, and she herself is always welcomed with enthusiasm in her vocal essays.

MR JAMES MELVIN.

Another notable local precentor was Mr James Melvin—a moulder to trade — who was in office in St Paul Street U.P. Church in 1853. In that year a modest body of working lads and lasses formed themselves into an institution known for many years after as the Aberdeen Choral Society. Their field was part song, and their first conductor, James Melvin. In music Mr Melvin was self-taught, but his grounding in the all-important matter of theory was none the less effective. His taste may not have been so refined as that of some of his compeers, but he succeeded in instilling musical principles into the minds of his "boys and girls," which proved of immense value to them in after years. During the time Mr Melvin was precenting

and leading the Choral Society he "brought out" several good solo voices—among others, John and "Sandy" Fleming, bass and baritone respectively.

Anecdotal.

Anecdotal.

WHY WE SHOULD SING.

Long and learned articles on the subject of "Why we should Sing" have come from able and facile pens, but anything more unique in its way than the argument contained in the "Reasons briefely set downe by th' auctor, to perswade every one to learne to sing," given in William Byrd's "Psalmes, Sonets, and Songs of Sadnes and Pietie," published in 1588, it would be hard to find. The reasons "briefely set downe" are:—

1. It is a knowledge easily taught, and quickly learned, when there is a good master and an apt scoller.

2. The exercise of singing is delightfull to nature, and good to preserve the health of man.

3. It doth strengthen all parts of the brest, and doth open the pipes.

4. It is a singular good remedie for a stuttering and stamering in the speech.

5. It is the best means to procure a perfect pronunciation, and to make a good orator.

6. It is the only way to know when nature hath bestowed the benefit of a good Voyce which guift is so rare, as there is not one among a thousand that hath it; and in many, that ex-

cellent guift is lost, because they want Art to expresse Nature.

7. There is not any Musicke of Instruments whatsoever, comparable to that which is made of the Voyces of men, where the Voyces are good, and the same well sorted and ordered.

8. The better the Voyce is, the meeter it is to honour and serve God therewith; and the Voyce of man is chiefly to be employed to that ende.

> Since singing is so good a thynge,
> I wish all men would learne to synge.

A SINGING LESSON.

Perhaps the central figure in the following "owre true tale" belonged to the class of non-efficients referred to in the end of the eighteenth century. In a church not far outside the Aberdeen "twal' mile" limit, the village—or should it not be the burgh?—shoemaker was the precentor. He was a thick-set man of something over fifty; and he had under his care a choir of about twenty, who met for practice a quarter of an hour before service every Sunday morning. At some period in his career this occupant of the "dask" had had one of his arms amputated at the elbow joint. In its place, his coat-sleeve covered an iron rod with a "cleek" at the cuff end. It was his left arm, and how he manipulated the holding of the psalm and tune book was a secret he alone knew. It looked like a very difficult balancing feat. This knight of the pitch-pipe,

Mr. Ludovic G. Sandison.

adorned with a gown—formerly the minister's—and in all the glory of a white kerchief knotted round his neck, was wont to "blow his blast," in the form of the keynote, with no uncertain sound. Taking up the note with his voice, something like the following were his instructions:—"Doh—hae, Sandy; hae ye a grip?" (Sandy was the bass leader.) "Oh, me—there noo, Jean." (Jean was the alto.) "Ee, soh—hist ye, Maggie, or I'll hae to lat it go—oh—doh," with a jerk, completed the chord. "Noo, I'll begin, and jist ye ca' tee ahin!" The members of the choir, like a flock of scattered sheep, followed as best they could, bleating mournfully enough as they went.

DIPLOMACY AND TACT.

Diplomacy and tact were frequent characteristics of the old precentor — professional and amateur. One wintry Sunday, a heavy cold had robbed of his voice the souter of a neighbouring village who walked six miles to officiate in the Parish Church at L——. In the churchyard he met the miller, and begged him to "raise the tune" that day. The miller, a tall man, of lusty frame, rather loosely built, with fiery locks and ruddy countenance, but jovial and good-natured withal, and vastly fond of a dram, looked perplexed. "Man," said he, "I wad do it richt willin'ly, but I was awsome fou' yestreen, an' I'm no verra siccar the day." The

precentor's difficulty, however, and his own kindly spirit prevailed, and so he soon found himself in the desk. There was no selecting of tunes beforehand. The psalm was announced, a tune found while the portion was read, and then the up-taker was ready to proceed.

Hymns were unknown, but the short and peculiar metres of certain psalms were a source of great tribulation to the precentor's soul in these days. To the miller's dismay, the 67th Psalm, first version, was announced. A common metre he could have faced with the courage of a lion, but a short metre, in his shaky condition, simply appalled him. The shoemaker saw the cloud deepen on his friend's face; but as the reading proceeded, the cloud gradually lifted, and the miller was himself again. The reading concluded, the minister once more announced "The 67th Psalm, first version—'Lord bless and pity us.'" Casting a significant look at the precentor, the miller rose and smilingly addressed the congregation. "Ma freen's," said he, "I think we'll try the second version." The miller was a genius!

A SLIP OF GENIUS.

The following is not a precentor story, but it is worth recording, all the same.

The slips of genius are interesting to ordinary mortals, who are amused, perhaps a little comforted, in detecting the mis-

takes made even by the most gifted writers. Most of these mistakes arise from want of close observation of natural facts, want of accurate reporting on those facts. The seeing eye is at fault, or the hearing ear, or the recording memory. Sometimes the poet has worked indoors, and neglected to check his descriptions by observation of nature and fact. Take the fine ballad of "Auld Robin Gray." It was written by Lady Ann Barnard, but it appeared anonymously and pretended to be an ancient Scottish ballad. A solitary mistake showed that the piece was not ancient. Lady Ann wrote—

Young Jamie lo'ed me weel, and sought me for his bride;
But saving a crown, he had naething else beside:
To make the crown a pound, my Jamie gaed to sea,
And the crown and the pound were baith for me.

The author forgot or did not know that the ancient pound Scots was actually less than a crown, and thus the modernity of the ballad was discovered.

AN OLDMELDRUM PRECENTOR.

Somewhere towards the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, John Seivewright, a popular psalmody reformer, flourished in the North Countrie, making Oldmeldrum his headquarters. John was a worthy in his way,

and does not seem to have been altogether an untalented man. He roamed about the counties of Aberdeen, Banff, and Kincardine, seated on the back of an old white "shelt," which formed a kind of signal of his approach. Seivewright made his presence felt, it would seem, down in Fordoun about 1794 or 1795 — that is, if we are to credit some doggerel verses written about him a few years later. The opening stanza went something like this—

> In the year o' 1794,
> When Heilant John the hills came o'er,
> He taught them a' to gape and glour,
> And sing the tunes in Fordoun.

It would appear, however, that he was not able to transmit his skill to his pupils, for the tenth verse purports to depict their doings one Sunday when he was absent, and when one after another essayed to mount the lateran but with no success. For—

> Up startit then the bricht Dunbar,
> Instead o' better he did waur,
> An' a' the singin' he did maur,
> An' lost the lines in Fordoun.

John Seivewright was precentor in the Parish Church of Meldrum till 1835, when he retired on an allowance of £3 yearly, paid by the Kirk-Session. He had a practical knowledge of music, and "a very respectable" singing voice; but in his teaching he was handicapped by an unfortunate impediment in his speech. Ap-

parently, he never attempted to train a choir, but generally a few singers sat up in the "cock-laft" of the kirk and loyally assisted him to lead the congregation. He was one of a few who in his time called out the names of the tunes previous to "raising" them. He is said to have been "a canty, weel-faured man, who wore a black coat somewhat browned with age." Mr James Love says—"He published a Collection of Church Tunes and Anthems in three parts; with a few Duets, Catches, Glees, etc., selected from the best authors." The work is now scarce. Seivewright died at Oldmeldrum in 1840.

A COUNTRY PRECENTOR.

With the advent of Sol-Fa came classes for reading music at sight in such simplified form as to bring the exercise within reach of even the meanest capacity. Even in small country districts classes were formed, which the old precentor viewed with no friendly eye. And when the consequential old soul let loose his tongue there was little that was kind or couthie flowed from it.

"Haivers," said old Robbie Allan, who combined the offices of "minister's man," precentor, and bellman — including, of course, the "cryin' o' the adverteesements" at the kirk door of D——, when the Sunday came round. "It's jist bletherin' styte. I've sung the kirk this 40 'ear come Mair-

tinmas, an' I've never nott a singin' class, nor a kyre, nor naething." And Robbie was no solitary example of the feelings of those who were being left behind in the race for "richt singin' in the kirk." It was not long after this that Robbie was prevailed upon to give up the precentorship, and a "young loon" from "the toon" was appointed in his stead. The worthy old man felt very sore on the point of "giving up," and all the overtures tending to friendship thrown out by the youngster were received freezingly till one never-to-be-forgotten Sunday.

The new precentor, it should be mentioned, with all the ardour of youthful confidence, started a singing class on Saturday nights to which "the youth and beauty" from far and near turned out in considerable numbers. Robbie attended the class most religiously, more for the purpose of trying to pick a hole in his successor's coat, it is to be feared, than for any benefit he might get. Be that as it may, he was in a more ungracious mood than usual one Saturday night, and left before the "practising" was over. On the following day the new precentor was nearing the church when he was rather puzzled to account for the sudden stoppage of the clanging of the bell. He reached the belfry to find Robbie, clawing the air with legs and arms, suspended by the bell-rope, which, in a fit of absent-mindedness, he had allowed to coil round his neck. With a rough jerk the

young lateranist got hold of Robbie's feet and landed him safely on the floor. There was a moment of excitement for both ere the rope was unwound, and then Robbie promptly collapsed. After assisting Robbie into the kirk, the precentor finished the bell-ringing, took the Bible and Psalm-book out of the press where they were kept during the week (there were no vestries then), placed them in the pulpit, "faistened the minister in," and, taking his place in the lateran, conducted the singing.

ROBBIE'S GRATITUDE.

Robbie, when he "cam' some till himsel'," was profuse in his gratitude. "Man, I wad hae been hanget, an't hadna been for the loon," he kept saying, in and out of season. "I've kent o' folk bein' strung up for sheep-stealin' an' the like, but this is the first I've heard o' a man bein' near hanged for ringin' the kirk bell." The old and the new precentor were fast friends ever after, and on occasion Robbie would once more take his place "in the dask," and with grave and quavering voice sing the melodies of the tunes accompanied—softly on the Sundays when he officiated—by the choir which had then gathered round his successor. Not many years later, Robbie Allan, ripe in years, "was gathered to his fathers," and in the midst of a blinding snowstorm he was laid in a quiet nook in the old kirkyard. The mourners were few, but in Robbie each

had lost a friend, and each was keenly proud to speak of him as his friend. His widow was inconsolable. A neighbour called one day to condole with her, and found the old body partaking of an extremely frugal meal. In answer to her neighbour's expression of sympathy, she said—"Ay, I've been greetin'; an' if I had this breid an' milk suppet I'm gyaun to greet again." When it came to her turn "to shuffle off this mortal coil," the minister called on her, and in the course of his exhortations explained to her that it behoved her to be sorry for her sins. "Na, na, minester," said she, "I wat I'm nae needin' ta' be sorry for my sins. They're a' weel daein' i' the warl! I wuss the lassies had deen as weel. Na, na, I've nae rizzen ta' be sorry for my sins!"

JOHNNIE FRASER.

Johnnie Fraser had precented in the auld kirk of F———, near Stonehaven, almost from time immemorial! His voice was compared to "a chield playin' a timmer tune upon a fite-ir'n fussle." His stock-in-trade consisted only of about half-a-dozen tunes—one of which, only, was a "lang" metre. It is said that he would try three or four times with as many tunes ere he could "get 'her' to swing." But Johnnie, for want of anything better, "jist" did. His Saturday nights were wont to be spent in conviviality, with

the result that he was not in the best of trim on the following morning. Once, at least, it is on record that he started the first Psalm to the air of "Scots wha hae," and struggled through it with flying colours! One Sunday he was fairly hors de combat, and didn't put in an appearance at the kirk. The minister was at his wits' end what to do. He gave out the opening Psalm, and then asked if there was anyone present who could and would raise the tune.

After some "silence that could be felt," a man stood up in the "body" of the kirk, and pointing to his right-hand neighbour, thus addressed the pulpit—"Look here, see, there's Geordie Leevenstone. I dinna ken hoo he can sing, but he's the deil an' a' at whustlin' a reel."

The grim King of Terrors threatened Johnnie and he was actually lying at death's door, when a cronie looked in to see him.

"Weel, ye're nae deid yet?" was the consolatory remark made by the visitor.

"Na," said Johnnie, "I'm nae deid yet."

"Weel," was the final remark of his friend, "fan ye div dee ye micht lat me ken. It's nae that I'm carin' muckle, but I wad just like to ken."

When he was nearing "the distant shore" his wife became somewhat impatient, and after a considerable period of significant quiet on his part, she made up

her mind that he was no more, and after weeping a little, "for the look o' things," she suddenly turned her attention to the question of who should make the coffin. After mature consideration and talk with those who were present, the widow came to the conclusion that a certain "Wully" Paterson should get the job. No sooner, however, had the name been spoken than Johnnie, with a manifest effort, "arose from the dead" and said—"If ye get that craiter Wully Paterson to mak' the coffin I winna pit a fit in't."

A COMBINATION.

Mr Curwen says:—"The old-fashioned precentor was too often ignorant and conceited, a man whose opinion of himself was in inverse proportion to his knowledge of music." The strictures—severe though they be—are, it is to be feared, too true. But the "man of music" was also sometimes unadaptable. The "up-taker" in a south country kirk was doing his best one Sunday to "fall into" a tune that would suit the peculiar metre of a psalm given out from the pulpit. After many attempts he gave up the effort, and, turning in the "dask," he thus addressed the minister—"Look here, see; an' that be the kind o' psalms ye're to gie oot, ye can sing them yersel'. Can ye no gie's the like o' the Auld Hunder't?"

Another "sweet" singer of the old school,

who disdained to use either pitch-pipe or tuning fork, on being requested to give the congregation "Irish tune" some Sunday, naively replied — "Na, man, na! There's a note in't that sudna be" — referring, no doubt, to the "top G."

The "use and wont" went even further. A notable worthy in the north had a special aversion to "a stranger in the pulpit," because—as he put it—they "fashed" him by "aye cheengin' the psalms." He had several times the misfortune to sing a common metre psalm to a long metre tune. To use up the extra notes, "slurs" had to be introduced, with the result that, as hardly two members of the congregation "slurred" at the same place, the noise and confusion were simply indescribable. One Sunday a "strange" minister, after the sermon, took it into his head to change the psalm for a hymn, the lines in which might have done for a wine-glass. The precentor had no tune in his mind, but, bold as brass, he rose, blew his reed, hummed a bit, and started. The first verse was a solo, the second a duet with a voice chiming in now and again, and the last verse ended with but one voice singing bass to the precentor's treble. No two verses had been sung to the same tune. "Saunders," said the minister at the close of the service, "that was a gey queer tune ye raised the day." "Maybe," was the reply, "but it was a queerer hymn."

THE SOCIAL ELEMENT.

A Southron belonging to the same school was the wonder and awe of the bairns, his head, covered with coarse, curly hair, wagging most ferociously while he sang. His stage whisper to the "counter" seated beside him as he "pitched" the tune—"Am I heich or laich, or juist aboot richt, Tammas?" used to set the youths of the congregation in a titter. Dauvit was fond of a dram, and for this reason he was often late on Sundays, and more than once was threatened with suspension. The crisis came at last. One morning, after "carbonate of soda" and other things had been tried, he went to the kirk. He managed to get through the first and second "singings" all right, but when it came to the third effort he was fast asleep. After a thorough shaking up, he returned from his "sojourn in the land of dreams" to announce to a startled congregation "That's the deil a drap, Wullie, nether het nor cauld."

Johnnie C—— was precentor at D—— Parish Kirk. He, too, was convivial, and was also consequently late on Sundays. Besides these two "cardinal virtues," Johnnie was blessed—or otherwise—with a wooden leg, which had been called into requisition in consequence of an accident that deprived him of the "real" limb. One Sunday he came stumping along the

road, to find Lucky Tamson leaning against the door of her "housie." "Ye'll need to rin the day, Johnnie, man," said she, "or than ye'll be ahin' !" "Feint a fear o' that," was the answer; "they canna gae far on wintin' me; they'll juist need to wait."

A SNUFF STORY.

A Southron precentor — an inveterate snuffer—found himself in the lateran one Sunday morning minus his snuff-box. Just as he realised the fact, the opening psalm was given out. So, squaring his shoulders and clearing his throat, this was something like the language of the comedy—set to the tune Martyrdom—that followed: —

By Baabel's streams we sat an' wept,
Whan Zion we thocht on—

"Hae ye your mull, Peter?"—this addressed to a member of the congregation seated in a front pew in the "body" of the kirk. The "mull" having been passed and a liberal pinch finding its way up the precentor's nose, he continued—

The mids' thereaff we hung oor hairps,
The willow-trees upon.
Ae—tchoo! a—tchoo, atchoo, ae—!
For there a song they but to have, ae—tchoo!
Wha did us captive bring;
Oor sp'ilers ca'd for mirth an' said—
Ae—tchoo! atchoo!—that's nae snuff, Peter—atchoo, atchoo, atchoo! !

There were tears, not only in the pre-

centor's voice, but in his eyes, and rolling down his cheeks. The sequel came at Peter's dinner-table that memorable Sunday, when he shook some snuff out of the pepper-castor into his plate of broth. In order that "the wife" might make no mistake, Peter had taken the precaution late on Saturday night to empty the packages of "spice" and snuff into the snuff-box and pepper-castor respectively!

A "SPRING" ON THE FIDDLE.

As had been his wont for over twenty years, the old minister of K—— Church, one Sunday morning, fully dressed for the service, walked sedately from the manse and reached the pulpit two or three minutes before "the bell rang in." To his dismay, he found that he had left home without his snuff-box and pocket handkerchief—a Turkey-red-coloured one. To attempt the sermon without these indispensables courted the direst disaster, so he gave out eight verses of Psalm cxix., and forthwith hied him home for the missing articles. Now, it so happened that Benjie, the precentor, was in very bad form that morning. In fact, to use his own figure of speech to the bellman before entering the kirk—"His vice was reid roch wi' roost, an' as broon as the ir'n eer (ore) i' the Firhill wall." He therefore selected a jaunty tune that the congregation knew pretty well, and hurried through his task

—none too well pleased at such a lengthy start for the day. The minister returned while the last of the eight verses was being sung, and at the close he "raxed ower" the book board and said, impressively—"Benjie, that's no a way to praise the Lord! There's no even decorum in't; and it sounds mair like a spring on the fiddle." "Brethren," he continued, "we'll sing other four verses; and, Benjie, tak' ye tent and also tak' time! Full your mouth wi' the big words, and chaw the syllables and the sma' words weel, for I kenna what way ye havena' choked yersel'." Benjie, with a desperate effort to restrain himself from "speakin' back," obeyed the minister's behest, and, as he was about to sit down, was tapped upon the shoulder, and the now kindly, couthy voice behind him said—"Here, man, tak' a lick oot o' the mull, for your heid's sair needin' reddin' the day."

A COUNTRY EXAMINATION.

About the middle of the last century, an itinerant teacher of music taught classes in the north, and on an occasional Sunday took the "dask" for a precentor friend. "Sandy" Taylor was a convivial soul, who looked on the punch-bowl as "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." A vacancy for a precentorship in the Parish Kirk of M—— occurred, and "Sandy" forthwith proferred his services till a "suitable" man was found to fill the post. The

first Sunday that Sandy officiated, a happy thought came to him. He would do a good turn to a "neepor"—one, Robbie Taggart by name, a souter body, "small of mind as well as in stature," but with an overweening "capacity" for flattery. Robbie lived "i' the neist parish," was a "cronie" of Sandy's—in fact, they were as thick as thieves. He had also an unquenchable thirst that cost him much exercise of mind —"forby the siller." Robbie was just the man for the precentorship of M——. Thus reasoned Sandy, and it did not take him long to convince Robbie that this was a grand thing for him! "Of course, Robbie, I'll hae to examine ye, ye ken, but that'll be a' richt."

At last the night of Robbie's "trials" came duly round, and brought with it "a fell thrang" congregation. The two cronies were in great fettle, and the following is something like the colloquy that took place on the occasion. Sandy led off with—"Noo, Robbie, lat's hear ye raise the tune to the twenty-fourt Psalm." "Wadna ye better dae't yersel', Sandy? Ye're better up till't than me. I ken I'll be sure to gang oot o't the first twa-three times." "Aweel," says Sandy, "there can be nae objection to me startin' ye aff, bit mind ye, ye maun hing in yersel' aifter that." To make a long story short, Robbie was appointed, but his terrible thirst prevented him continuing in office for more than three Sundays!

Mr. Alexander Pirie.

(Photo. by Hampton, Glasgow.)

MUSIC v. BUSINESS.

We hear less frequently nowadays of professional musicians exchanging the field of music for that of commerce, nor do we so much find the combination of commercial business with the profession of music. It was not always so, however. Time was when such a signboard as "John Smith, Butcher and Teacher of Music," was not uncommon. And when all has been said, the incongruity was, perhaps, more apparent than real. If John Smith confined his "slaying" and "flaying" skill to the animals entrusted to him, there is no reason why he should not at intervals teach music as well as the next man. As a rule, however, a man most admires in himself those abilities which he least possesses.

Michael Kelly, for example, considered himself a better composer than a singer. But, after some experience of professional life, Kelly found that his income from that source was far from satisfactory, so he went into the wine trade. As a wine importer he was a great success. He was, of course, made the butt of the wits, and Sheridan declared that the legend on his signboard should read—"Michael Kelly, Composer of Wine and Importer of Music." It is not a far cry back to the time when a German pastry-cook severed his savoury connection with the Fatherland and

settled down in Scotland as a full-blown professor of music. Whatever may have been his merits in the gastronomic line, he certainly did not excel in the delectable realm of music. But, while some make a name for themselves by their work and ability, his foreign name gained for him pupils and—fame! He ultimately became so "famous," indeed, that he found it necessary to suddenly leave the land of his adoption.

These may, of course, be isolated cases. Certain it is that the precentors of other days were, quite as often as not, as good leaders of psalmody as they were bakers, grocers, or shoemakers. There were no voice-trainers, and but few who knew anything about the mechanism of the vocal organs. To-day, the number has not increased with the population. Doubtless there are many professors; but it is a limited number among the hordes of teachers who profess to "teach" singing who really know the rudiments of how to "build" a voice, and a still more limited number who "by precept and example" can instruct a pupil.

NASAL TONE.

The language may have something to do with it, and the method of singing a good deal more, but the fact remains that French vocalists have more or less a tendency towards a nasal quality of tone.

Whenever, therefore, one hears a Frenchman pronounce upon the nasal quality of a voice, it may at once be taken for granted that the peculiarity is sufficiently pronounced. A singer of the last century sinned so much in this nasal respect that he was often greeted with—"That nose has a really fine voice." But we have not to cross the Channel to listen to noses that may be said to have good voices. Or to put it another way—How many excellent voices we have with defective noses!

The old precentor, with his restricted knowledge and opportunities, was, it is to be feared, a sinner among sinners in the matter of "singing through his nose." The remark was often heard applied to the precentor, both in town and country — "Oh, Robbie sings awa' rael weel, an' he hadna sic a sneevil!" Yet the "sneevil" was but one of the defects to be met with in precentors of bye-gone days.

A north-country aspirant to "dask" honours had an impediment in his speech—something between a "halt" and a "mant." On his "trial" Sunday he got the opening psalm to "line-out." The difficulty of "lining-out" made him more nervous than he would have been otherwise probably. After much stuttering, he ultimately managed to reach the goal, but not without an accompaniment of badly-suppressed merriment on the part of the congregation. "L-l-l-l-lauch awa'," he said, "but wa-wa-

wa-wa-wait till I yo-yo-yo-yo-yoke to sing!"

By an odd but inflexible law of nature, any halt of speech may be overcome if the speaker but elect to sing! When this applicant, therefore, raised the tune, he so captivated the congregation that a better man coming after him had some difficulty in securing the appointment.

CAMPBELL—"AN APPRECIATION."

A story is told of Thomas Campbell, the poet, regarding a new metrical version of the Psalms that has not done much duty up to now. He is suposed to partly tell the story himself. One morning the postman brought him a letter "from the Kirk of Scotland's General Assembly, soliciting me to versify some of the Psalms of David anew for the benefit of the congregations." Campbell was, of course, a staunch Churchman, following in the line of his ancestors. Yet his reply to the request that he should supplant "our old friend Rous" (as Carlyle put it) in the praises of the congregation was somewhat ungracious. "Unless they will promise me to learn singing," he wrote, "and to warble my translations more melodiously than they do the old, I do not mean to put pen to paper."

Campbell, it would seem, had as poor an opinion of the Scottish Presbyterian psalmody as the roue Earl of Rochester had of an old English parish clerk's singing from Sternhold and Hopkins's collection.

This is Rochester's impromptu on the subject—

Sternhold and Hopkins had some qualms
When they translated David's Psalmes,
To make the heart right glad.
But had it been King David's fate
To hear thee sing and then translate,
By heaven, 'twould sent him mad!

Was it Scott who thought the Scottish Church singing of his day was best heard at a distance—like the bagpipes?

PRECENTOR POETS.

The precentor's efforts were not solely confined to leading the praise in the sanctuary. He sometimes tried his hand at making verses; at other times he made tunes. The poetic effusions of the knight of the lateran generally were built to a pattern, and, above all, they were practical. Here is a thumb-nail sketch meant to describe the author himself:—

What a simple fool am I,
Full of inconsistency!
Hot and cold and sweet and sour,
All in less than half an hour.

This homely poet must have studied natural history too, and to some purpose, ere he composed the following ode:—

Snow, snow, everywhere,
On the ground and in the air;
Snow upon the gravel walks,
Rotten leaves and cabbage stalks.

Bangor, a tune with a Welsh melody, originally appeared in Ravenscroft's Psalter, published in 1621, and was a favourite in some districts of Scotland till the real Bangor, now known as Colchester, ousted it. The latter originally appeared in Tansur's "A Compleat Melody; or, The Harmony of Sion" (1736.) It was about the former that the old-time precentor delivered himself thus:—

Oh! Bangor's notes are unco heich,
And try the lasses sair, O;
They pech and grane and skirl and skreich
Till they can sing nae mair, O.

It must have been the same author who composed the following:—

O Banchory's Lands are bonnie,
When spring comes in the year;
And lasses sweet and mony,
But nane sae sweet's my dear.

PRECENTOR RHYMES.

It is said that in byegone days pious Presbyterians considered it a kind of sacrilege to use the words of the "inspired" Psalms when practising the tunes. The result was a number of doggrel verses came into use specially written or "composed" for the use of the choir. Here is one that appears to have been extensively used all over Scotland—

One year begins, another ends,
Our time doth quickly pass and go;
All this for our instruction tends,
And we are wise to take it so.

That was the Long Metre version. The Common and Short Metres were thus stated—

One year begins, another ends,
Our time doth pass and go;
All this for our instruction tends,
If we could take it so.

The year begins and ends,
Our time doth pass and go;
All this for our instruction tends,
If we would take it so.

The following was used even after the Disruption days—

Come let us sing the tune of French,
The second measure slow;
The third ascendeth very high,
The fourth doth downward go.

Mr William Carnie quotes the following quatrain as an example where the letter "s" is not once introduced—

The flower doth fair in garden grow,
The heather on the hill;
The river doth to ocean flow,
Then bide my time I will.

We frequently hear of the ruggedness of the metrical version of the Psalms, and the unsingable qualities of some of the verses. The following is not, perhaps, so rugged as realistic, and it is not quite so old as the

hills. It is, in fact, a stanza taken from a hymn sung not so very long ago in a wee town just over the Border:—

My heart is like a rusty lock,
Oh! oil it with Thy grace;
And rub it, rub it, rub it, Lord,
Until I see Thy face.

The humorous element also found a place in these practice verses. In Glasgow and the West of Scotland there was a rhyme—sung to the old-world tune Desert—that found much favour—

A weaver said unto his son,
The day that he was born,
My blessings on your curly pow,
You'll gang wi' pirns the morn.

When it is taken into account that Desert is a repeat tune—more especially in the last measure, and that the last word, "morn," is oft repeated—the comicality of the situation is accentuated.

Here is a verse all the way from the United States of America—

Oh! praise the Lord with one consent,
And in this grand design,
Let Britain and the Colonies
Unanimously join.

This is another typical specimen—

Elgin in Moray's in the north,
From whence comes good but rare;
The horses they are very fat,
The lasses very fair.

These remind one of the lines of a song that was very popular 30 to 40 years ago—entitled, "The Old Arm-chair":—

In that old arm-chair my father sat,
In that my mother smiled;
Whilst on the hearthstone slept the cat
And the brass kettle "biled."

The "ever," "never," "tabernacle," etc., used as end words were much in vogue in the old precentor's days, and probably prompted the wag who perpetrated the following:—

(Tune—Kilmarnock.)

A man set out one stormy night,
And oh but he did shi——ver;
And ev'ry blast the cold wind blew
Made all his muscles qui——ver.

Says he, "To come again this road
On such a night, oh ne——ver;
And if you catch me here again
Then spifflicate me e——ver.

"I'd rather scorch in India's sun,
And risk a sluggish li——ver;
Or wallow in some shmy pond,
Or crockodily ri——ver.

"No, though of all your earthly wealth
You gave me every sti——ver,
I'd still refuse to do your bid,
And scorn the gift and gi——ver."

The following belongs to the same "school":—

And could St Paul but just look in,
Frae higher scenes extracted;

And hear his gospel here explained.
By Jove! he'd be distracted.

These "rhymes" may be multiplied ad lib.:—

I wish I were a brewer's horse,
To gang aboot wi' yill,
And every door that I'd come to,
Could stand and drink my fill.

I'll bore a hole in the King's nose,
And through't I'll put a string;
I'll haul him up to Jericho,
And there I'll let him hing.

The two following verses are of much older date, we fear—

King David stans wi' hairp in hand,
He's maister o' the queir; (choir)
Ten thousand times that man is blessed
Wha doth sic music hear.

I wonder whaur John Tamson gets
Sae mony carl-doddies;
He gets them at the mountain fit
To deal amangst puir bodies.

Meantime, we may conclude these rhymes with an effusion that has a more modern smack about it—

That man hath perfect blessedness
Who walketh not astray,
But, think on Nature's cussedness
Wha made us men of clay!

Iniquities, I must confess,
Prevail against me do;
And, when I tak' an extra gless,
Gosh! there's a how-dye-do!

It's ye've done this and ye've done that,
And ye've done unco ill;
They'd even say I'd teem't a vat,
When I had but a gill!

Though perfect eloquence adorns
My sweet persuasive tongue,
They'd vote me into ways I'd scorn,
And, conter'd tak' the bung!

Then stedfast let us still remain,
Though dangers rise around,
Till beer and grog, like genial rain,
In rolling waves abound!

Reminiscent.

Reminiscent.

"IN THE DAYS OF MY YOUTH."

Early recollections of local precentors carry me back to the beginning of the sixties. Before I was quite ten years of age I had precented in the Parish Church of Kintcre, and begun my business career as a letter engraver with Mr Robert Hughes, then in Broad Street. My first lateran experience embraced a kind of musical triumph and an ignominious downfall. Of course I donned the gown, got through the various singings, and "the reading of the cries" all right, but in making my exit from the "dask" I tripped on the frayed old garment of office and made a most undignified plunge into the passage—missing three of the four steps that led into the rostrum.

Previous to that, however, I used to "take turn" in leading the singing at school preceding morning prayers. I was a pupil at the Free East Church School, St Andrew Street, then under the charge of Mr James Stevenson—happily still alive, and the honoured "ruling elder" of

the East U.F. Church. We used to get music lessons once a week from Donald Reid, the favourite precentor of the Free East; and I have yet vivid recollections of how we struggled through "the lines and spaces of the staff" notation! F. A. C. E. was all right when we got the letters in that order, but—sometimes Donald would invert some of the "spaces," and then! The reward to the boy who answered most of the questions at a lesson was a peppermint drop fished out from one of good old Donald Reid's waistcoat pockets.

My first experience of a choir was at Gilcomston Parish Church—"the Chapel o' Ease"—where I sang alto for some years, under Mr John Watson, the then, and for a long time after, precentor of the church. When my voice broke, I drifted in among the tenors, where I had as companions Peter Black, Peter Burt (who has a son and daughter carrying on successfully the musical traditions of his family), and Bob. Steele. James Strathdee was one of the principal basses, along with Angus Shaw, "Sandy" Cruickshank, and Richard Russell. With one exception, these basses are still members of the Gilcomston Choir. The days spent in the Chapel o' Ease choir were happy ones, and had much to do with my after musical career. Mr Watson was an enthusiastic precentor.

A SHOP IN CORRECTION WYND.

My apprentice master, Mr Hughes, was for a year or two lateranist in the Free West—one of the three churches at the top of the Mutton Brae. What a grand singer he was. His voice was tenor, and such songs sung at concerts or social entertainments as "The Anchor's Weigh'd," "Gae bring to me a pint o' wine," or "Scotland Yet" were given by him with a freedom and refinedness of taste that could not be eclipsed. But Mr Hughes was not a success as a precentor. He could not read music, and consequently had to learn everything he sang pretty much by ear. At Mr Hughes's death, which took place in 1865, I changed into the employment of Mr John H. Stephen, engraver, Correction Wynd. Here I breathed an atmosphere of music that laid the foundation of what was to come. Mr Stephen and his family were all more or less musical; and, in addition, the dear old shoppie in Correction Wynd was haunted by musical and artistic celebrities. In the back room how many a new tune was tried over? Here I met that singularly modest, retiring man, William Broomfield, for the first time, and the man and the boy became friends. Here, too, came William Smith, the somewhat erratic but kind-hearted editor of "The People's Tune Book." And James Watson, the jeweller,

precentor for years in St Nicholas Lane U.P. Church; and William Simpson, another lovable musical crank; and on occasion, too, William Carnie. Then there was "Sandy" Colston, the erstwhile leader in the old West Kirk; ever-to-be-remembered, cheery, rollicking, laughing William Davidson, paper ruler—I think I hear him trolling out "Rattlin', Roarin' Willie" while I write, in that delightfully clear tenor voice of his—his favourite song—at least so 'twas said—being "Wae's me for Prince Charlie"; and "Sandy Clerichew, a genuine specimen of the old school. Again, Mr William Walker, the umbrella maker — grandfather to the present generation of musical Walkers—would drop in on a Thursday night and regale us with old precentor stories. Mr Stephen was a bass singer, and, along with many others of a byegone age, was a member of the Harmonic Choir, of which Mr Carnie was conductor. His eldest son, now Mr John H. Stephen, also sang bass, but at the informal practices we used to sort ourselves out admirably. Sometimes we were but a quartet, without an audience, but when it was any of Broomfield's tunes, he was the audience, and a critical one at that. There are but three of us left out of the musical circle that from time to time met in that little back shop.

It was not long ere Colston thought it would save him a lot of trouble and

Mr. John F. Anderson.

expense—he lived at Bieldside, and drove out and in with "Sandy's" 'bus from the top of Market Street—if I could be got to officiate for him at the Thursday service then held in St Mary's Chapel, under the East Parish Church. And so, week in, week out, for a considerable period I led the "congregation" there, which consisted mostly of the Melvins, singer and players —two of them were violinists—and two or three old "wives" who were perhaps not too "kirk-greedy" in so far as the Sunday services were concerned! Then, one memorable Wednesday afternoon, I went across to the old West Kirk and interviewed Mr Carnie and a blackboard with two staves of five lines each painted upon it. I remember there was some little difficulty in getting a bit of chalk, and later it seemed all but an impossibility to find a piece of cloth to wipe the board. I thus "faced the music" theoretically for the first time, got a certificate of proficiency, made application, and was successful in being appointed to my first charge—while yet a "loon."

IN THE COUNTRY.

My new post entailed a walk of twelve miles—back and fore—to the church every Sunday for three years. They were happy days these, and led to my acquaintance with more precentors. First of all, there was sturdy Hugh Macdonald, in Dyce Parish Church—a fine bass singer. Then

there were my old, old friends of the lateran, Peter Kilgour, at Newhills Parish Church, and Edward Woollard—first at the Episcopal Church, Buxburn, and later at the Free Church, Newhills. Coming nearer to the city were William Bissett, of the Established Church, and James Forbes, of the Free Church—Woodside.

When I came back to town it was to become acquainted with Mr William Meston, the honoured president of the Musical Institute, and to a little later sit for a Society of Arts certificate. We were a small band who tried that year. As far as I remember there were Messrs John Watson, Gilcomston Parish; Thomas Mavor, Free East; James Forbes, Woodside Free; David Smith — then employed with Messrs Lumsden and Co., at Union Bridge—and your obedient. "Davie" had not got a charge then, I think, but he was some time afterwards appointed to the North Parish Church.

It was about these days that I came in contact with Mr James Valentine—of the Free North Church, in the Rev. "Dophie" Campbell's time—Mr David Taylor, senior partner then of the firm of Taylor and Henderson, and precentor in Trinity Free Church; and Mr James Macbeth, founder of the North of Scotland Music Saloons, now carried on by his eldest son, and precentor for many years in Gilcomston Free Church—in Dr M'Gillivray's day. About this time, too, Mr John Henderson was pre-

centing in St Nicholas Lane Church; Mr Alexander Mackay—so long connected with the printing department of the "Aberdeen Free Press," was singing at St Clement's Free; Mr Alexander Pirie was in John Knox Free (where he precented for some seventeen years); and Mr Martin Ogilvie was at St Paul Street U.P. Martin Ogilvie sat in the back seat of the tenors in the Choral Union chorus in those days. He was a quick reader of music; an impulsive singer, and one night he nearly landed the "He shall break their bonds asunder" chorus in a fine corner! The baton descended, but Ogilvie's was the only voice that went with it! William Morrison had to again sound the preliminary chord on the organ, preceding the tenor entry, and then a scramble was made through the chorus. I had not previously met Mr Robert Williamson—for a number of years precentor in Holburn Free, who along with Mr Robert Cooper took tenor solo work at the Union's concerts—but had frequently heard him sing. Cooper was in the West Parish Church from the time of Carnie's resignation until after Mr John Kirby had been some time organist. A more tasteful local singer I never heard than Robert Cooper; and a more bright, robust, full tenor voice than Williamson's never rang out from the Music Hall platform. One other singer of much promise that I can

recall was Mr A. C. Youngson, also a precentor in St Nicholas Lane.

Writing about the Youngsons reminds me that the tenor side of the house did not have it all its own way. Robert Youngson, in such songs as "The Wolf," "Will o' the Wisp," and "The Bellringer," at one time needed a lot of beating. Mr Youngson was not in harness long as a precentor, but I remember him leading in the Blackfriars Street "kirkie," when Rev. Joseph Vickery was pastor, and when John Milne, the barber, was organist. Mr Souper—or "Hughie," as he was lovingly called by his intimates—was singing in the Free West, after probation at Banchory-Devenick; George Hill was holding forth in his quiet way at Belmont Congregational; and James Wilson at "Fittie."

Among others who were doing splendid work as precentors or leaders of Psalmody in Aberdeen at or about that time were—Mr Alexander Machray, C.A., who conducted the praise in the East Parish Church from 1855 till 1876, and was followed by his brother, Mr John Machray. The first-named was editor of an admirable collection of psalm and hymn tunes—"The Scottish Psalmist"—published in '76. Then there were Mr Archibald Watt; Mr A. B. Shirreffs (South Parish); Mr John Ewing (Holburn); Mr C. B. Williams (North); Mr Thomas Mavor (Free East); Mr John Munro (Free Holburn); and

others whose names might fittingly be included.

AMONG THE LAST OF THE RACE.

The final race of precentors who had to bow to the inevitable introduction of the organ in the Scottish churches were known, in cities and towns at least, as leaders of Psalmody. The title, although not so euphonious as the time-worn word precentor, was probably more descriptive and accurate. And it has to be remembered that the lateran began to disappear very quickly with the introduction of the great church extension schemes in the 'sixties of last century. The leader of Psalmody differed from the precentor in one important essential; he had to be capable of training a choir. His voice—except perhaps on Communion Sundays—was never heard singing the melody of the tunes. He took his place in the choir seat, and with the others sang his part. The names of some of the local men who flourished, more particularly in the last days, may conclude this article. These, then, included Mr William Cooper (North Parish); Mr T. M. Ruddiman (East Parish); Mr John S. Brown (Free Trinity); Mr J. S. Jackson (Free West); Mr Charles Souter (Queen's Cross); Mr Alexander W. Millar (Ferryhill Free); Mr W. T. Forrest (East Free), etc.

But still names come up of worthy men

who presided in the "dask." I had all but forgotten Mr A. G. Watson, for a number of years precentor of the High Free Church, from 1872; Mr Thomas Still (Bon-Accord Free); and Mr John F. Anderson (Ferryhill Free). Mention must also be made of Mr William Litster, who followed Mr David Taylor in Trinity Free Church. Mr Litster, it is told, wouldn't use the lateran Bible, and thereby gave dire offence to some of the worthies connected with the congregation. It is by the work he has accomplished in the Aberdeen Board Schools and the local Musical Institute that Mr Litster must be judged; and it is that work that will keep his memory green. Many of the men mentioned have crossed "into the silent land"; those who are left will doubtless look back with honest pleasure to the days of their precentorship. Could a meeting be arranged of the ex-lateranists still in the land of the living what a wealth of reminiscence would there be!

AN ECHO.

To any one genuinely interested in the old precentor a paragraph such as I shall presently quote brings back memories of a tender character, and one can almost feel the aroma of the old peppermint lozenge and the scent of woodruff. The days come back to us when elderly womenfolk carried their Bibles reverently rolled up in their

folded pocket handkerchiefs. Spotlessly clean, white, stiff mutches stand out in bright array; and among the better-class folk the filled shawl or plaid of a deliriously complicated pattern adorned the shoulders of the comely goodwife as she wended her way decorously by the side of her husband to the House of God on Sunday. He, too, was decked out in his "best blacks," that had lain, carefully folded, in a drawer all the other six days of the week. If doubt was in anyone's mind that the garments were not thus treated, the marks of the folds themselves spoke in simple eloquence. It is matter of opinion, perhaps, whether "those who have long gone before" did not more seriously take the Sunday than we in those harassed days of rush and scurry for bare existence, yet there can be no question but that in a byegone age reverence and a devotion to the traditions of our national kirk were characteristic of the people—high and low, rich and poor. The Psalmody in those days may not have had the finished musical nicety of to-day, but the earnestness of purpose, the sincerity were there in full and flowing measure. The extract following is from a south country newspaper—

The Parish Church at Gretna Green, to the charge of which the Rev. J. C. Stafford, formerly of Mochrum, was inducted the other day, is one of the few churches that retain the

old-style precentor. The local schoolmaster, a gentleman of patriarchal appearance, occupies a miniature pulpit beneath the minister. He sounds his tuning-fork, hums, and then leads the singing with vigour. There is no choir nor "kist o' whistles," but the precentor conducts the singing with an air of "follow me and you'll not go far wrong." The church itself is very old-fashioned. High, uncomfortable pews, that make the congregation "sit up" with an air of martyrdom, form the seating accommodation. The church, in common with those of Kirkpatrick-Fleming, Middlebie, and Hoddom, has two galleries, the entrance to which is gained by an outside stair. There is no vestry, and the minister walks from the manse adjoining in his robes to the church.

Or, again, with what feelings of pride will an old precentor read such a paragraph as now reproduced—

An interesting ceremony took place in St Andrew's Halls, Glasgow, on Wednesday evening, when Mr James Robson, whose age and service have gained for him the distinction of being the oldest teacher of music in Great Britain, was entertained at a large public gathering. Mr Robson was born at Scone on 20th May, 1810, so that he is now in his 97th year. Early displaying a talent for music, Mr Robson was in 1834 appointed precentor in the South Secession Church, Perth. Ten years later he removed to Greyfriars Church, Glasgow, as leader of Psalmody, and he retained that position till 1890. Shortly after going to Glasgow, he organised the Greyfriars Philharmonic Association, and he was an ardent advocate of the Tonic Sol-fa method from its introduction into Scotland in 1856. In addition to private teach-

ing, he carried on classes in other churches, and in many private institutions in Glasgow, such as the Old Trades House School, the Glasgow Highland Society's School, the Buchanan Institution, and the original Logan and Johnston School. At the same time he travelled widely over the surrounding districts, teaching in Rothesay, Largs, Gourock, Greenock, Helensburgh, the Vale of Leven, etc. For 36 years he was singing master at Hutcheson's Boys' Grammar School. In the course of Wednesday night's proceedings Mr Robson received at the hands of Dr J. Wallace Anderson an address and handsome testimonials, subscribed by old pupils and admirers all over the world.

The first of these extracts proves that in the minds of old-fashioned people old things never grow old, or, if they do, they are still better than innovations. But, alas! the minority dwindles down year by year, and even now the precentor is become a fast receding memory.

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